

**A STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY PROTESTANT PREACHING IN KOREA:
ITS EXEGESIS, HERMENEUTICS, AND THEOLOGY**

**A Dissertation
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the Faculty of the
School of Theology at Claremont**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy**

**by
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Abstract

A Study of Contemporary Protestant Preaching in Korea: Its Exegesis, Hermeneutics, and Theology

Chi Young Kay

The rapid church growth that has occurred recently in Korea has been accompanied by numerous problems. Many concerned churchmen and churchwomen attribute the malaise and crisis within the Korean church to unbiblical preaching practices, and feel that there is an urgent need for the Korean Protestant church to discover genuine biblical preaching.

In view of rampant unbiblical elements in Korean preaching, Chapter 2 examines the importance and necessity of theology as conscience and critic of Korean preaching. Since Korean Christians have a deep respect for the canon of the church through their cultural traditions, all Korean preachers claim that they deliver strictly textual and biblical sermons. Thus, there is a great deal of confusion as to what constitutes a biblical sermon. In Chapter 3, it is concluded that, for a sermon to be truly biblical, the Bible should govern the content of the message and the function of the sermon should be analogous to that of the text.

Phenomenologically, one can distinguish three major streams in contemporary Korean Protestant preaching: expository, life-situation (the message of threefold blessing), and prophetic. In Chapters 4 through 6, these three currents of Korean preaching are critically studied and evaluated in terms of biblical preaching, as defined in Chapter 3.

In the concluding chapter, it is pointed out that the primary reason for unbiblical preaching in Korea is that many preachers do not take seriously biblical exegesis, hermeneutics, and theology; in fact, they simply bypass the entire process of exegesis. Accordingly, eisegesis, pretexting, proof-texting, and moralistic and allegorical interpretation are commonly practiced. Thus, serious exegesis of both the text and the congregation are required for biblical preaching. After exegeting the text and the congregation, the preacher must shape his or her sermon to say what the text says and do what the text does. Only then will the message of liberating good news be proclaimed anew in the Korean Protestant church.

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CHAPTER 1

The Present State of Preaching in Korea

Introduction

Although Korean Christianity is only 100 years old, recent statistics show that more than 25 percent of South Koreans (eight to ten million) are now Christians, and a special report in Christianity Today predicts that the figure will be 42 percent by the end of this century.¹ Christians in other countries look at this miraculous growth with genuine amazement. What explains it? Experts on church growth cite a number of factors: (1) the religious vacuum that existed when Christianity was first introduced in 1884; (2) the oppression and persecution under (a) Japanese colonialism, and (b) communism during the Korean War; (3) the human rights movement that has arisen in opposition to the Korean military dictatorship in recent decades; (4) the sense of impending crisis and war; and (5) the church's zealous evangelistic efforts.

The single most powerful and dynamic force in the growth of the Protestant church in Korea, however, is the preaching of the Word of God.² It has often been pointed out that "Whenever Christianity has made substantial progress, great preaching has led the way."³ Edwin C. Dargan confirms this view.

¹ Christianity Today Institute, "Will Success Spoil the South Korean Church?" Christianity Today, 20 Nov. 1987: 29-44.

² Chang-Shik Lee, Hankuk Kyohoeuh Urhjewa Onul [Korean church: yesterday and today] (Seoul: KCLS, 1977), 28-44.

³ H. C. Brown, Jr., H. G. Clinard, and Jesse J. Norcutt, Steps to the Sermon (Nashville: Broadman, 1963), 28.

Decline of spiritual life and activity in churches is commonly accompanied by a lifeless, formal, unfruitful preaching, and this partly as cause, partly as effect. On the other hand, the great revivals of Christian history can most usually be traced to the work of pulpit, and in their progress they have developed and rendered possible a high order of preaching.⁴

The Korean Protestant churches have always placed preaching at the very center of their pastoral ministry. In fact, Korean Protestant ministers preach far more sermons than their colleagues in other countries. They normally preach every Sunday morning and Sunday evening, again at the Wednesday evening service, and also provide a sermonette at the daybreak service every day of the week. Thus, the typical Korean pastor delivers at least three sermons and seven sermonettes weekly.⁵

Yet, the rapid church growth to which preaching has contributed so much has in recent decades been accompanied by many problems. One problem has been the church's preoccupation with its own affairs, such as competitive numerical growth, budget increases, and the building of luxurious sanctuaries. These and other secular interests draw much harsh criticism from Korean society in general. There is also growing self-criticism among the Korean church leaders of the church's syncretistic compromise with

⁴ Edwin C. Dargan, A History of Preaching, vol. 1 (1954; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), 13.

⁵ Chang-Bok Chung, "A Study of Preaching with Particular Reference to the Korean Cultural Context, incorporated into a textbook called: Preaching for Korean Preachers" (S.T.D. diss., San Francisco Theological Seminary, 1978), p. 2.

materialism, mammonism, Neo-Pythagoreanism, and other secular ideologies.⁶

Many concerned church men and church women attribute the malaise and crisis of the Korean church to her unbiblical preaching. They believe that Korean preaching has not led the church toward renewal and transformation, but rather contributed to the general malaise by compromising with materialism, baptizing a health and wealth gospel without Christian commitment and social responsibility. They also insist that what is urgently needed for the reformation of the Korean Protestant churches is a renewal of preaching. One homiletician comments:

In accordance with the development of the national economy, the Korean church's pulpit message has changed. From the pulpit, the prosperity and success gospel has been strongly proclaimed. The church's preaching has not led the congregation to overcome their understanding of God's blessing in purely material terms, but rather blessed their desire for material blessing and prosperity.⁷

The basic reason for this rampant unbiblical preaching in Korea is that many preachers fail to take biblical exegesis, hermeneutics, and theology very seriously. Many of them simply bypass the whole process of exegesis, and often use a biblical text to present their personal philosophy or private opinions as if they were the Word of God. Thus, eisegesis, pretexting, proof-texting, and allegorization are commonly used by many preachers.

⁶ Professor Bong-Ho Son defines Neo-Pythagoreanism as the Korean church's excessive obsession with the numerical growth of church members in his article "Some Dangers of Rapid Growth," in Korean Church Growth Explosion, eds. Bong-Rin Ro and Marlin L. Nelson (Seoul: Word of Life, 1983), 336.

⁷ Sung-Koo Chung, "Sung Suhjerk Messagel Dashi Chatja" [Let us recover the biblical message], Pastoral Monthly 7 (Dec. 1983): 73.

Pitfalls of Successful Ministry

During the last few decades, one of the Korean national goals has been: "Let us have a better life and prosperity like the advanced countries."⁸ The passion and zeal for material prosperity has widely permeated the fiber of the whole society. Unfortunately, Korean churches entered a "Babylonian captivity" under the spell of secular materialism, rather than becoming a transforming agent. Thus, for many preachers, successful ministry is meant to have a bigger church with a good salary and many fringe benefits. It is not uncommon for Korean pastors to ask each other, "How many church members do you have?", "How much is your salary?", or "How many square feet does your house have?"

Since the standard and norm of successful ministry has become materialistic and secular, many Korean preachers will adopt all kinds of methods that will help them have at least from a thousand to several thousand church members. To attract more people, they will preach quite entertaining but unbiblical sermons, such as "possibility or positive thinking" types of sermons or other interesting sermons, without thoughtful scrutiny.⁹ Augustine, in his book, De Doctrina Christiana offers the well-known definition of the speaker's task as decere (teach), delectare (delight), and flectere (influence) in order to be able to appeal to the intellect, the feelings, and the will of the listener.¹⁰ It seems that many Korean preachers are

⁸ Ji-Chul Kim, "Moonje Sokaesuh Somangul Bobnida" [Discerning hope in the midst of problems], Ministry and Theology 1 (July 1989): 30.

⁹ Jung-Un Kim, "Mokhoe Hyunchang ul Uehan Shinhakueh Mosaek" [An exploration of theology for ministerial praxis], Christian Thought 31 (Oct. 1987): 43.

¹⁰ Yngve Brilioth, A Brief History of Preaching (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965), 51.

obsessed with the desire to please and entertain their congregations by giving the kind of popular message people want to hear, in order to build large churches. Thus, prophetic preaching with an emphasis on repentance and Christian witness has become unpopular among the success-oriented ministers. However, responsible preachers must be concerned about being true to the text they preach.

If the question of valid interpretation does not trouble us, it may be because we have confused pragmatics with truth. For many pastors, truth may tend to be defined as ... "whatever works in my parish," with the word "works" left wide open We are apt to judge "true interpretation" of scripture by the category of "helpfulness" to people in our parishes. "Truth" and "efficacy" are two different kinds of judgments. In speaking of God, the question we must ask of interpretation is "Is it true?" and not "Is it helpful?"¹¹

Pitfalls of Shamanism

When Koreans go to church, they bring their shamanistic background with them. Shamanism is historically the oldest Korean religion, and Professor Tong-Shik Ryu goes so far as to assert that the Korean mindset is basically shamanistic.¹² Shamanism is one of the most primitive natural religions of the world, and from the Neolithic age onwards it has molded the minds of Koreans. Basically, shamanism is an animistic belief that every object in the natural world is possessed of a soul; good spirits bring blessings to human beings, evil spirits bring misfortune. Accordingly, it is necessary to have intermediaries, shamans, to drive off evil spirits and invoke good spirits

¹¹ David Buttrick, Homiletic (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 270.

¹² Tong-Shik Ryu, Hankuk Chongkyo wa Kidokkyo [The Christian faith encounters the religions of Korea] (Seoul: KCLS, 1965), 15-39.

so as to bring about a happy outcome. To do this, shamans perform ceremonies designed to forestall calamities and invoke blessings by means of special rituals such as chanting, dancing and offering, which amounts to a form of bribery.¹³

One of the characteristics of shamanism, according to Professor Ryu, is dependence on others. Taking no responsibility for his own life, a person allows the shaman to take charge: eliminating calamities and calling for blessings or good fortune through the prescribed rites.¹⁴ Therefore, it is not surprising to note that many new believers look upon their pastor as more of a shaman than as a spiritual leader preaching and teaching the Word of God. Many, in fact, are more interested in their pastor's prayer of blessing than in his sermons. They also think that the pastor's prayer of blessing is far more efficacious than that of a layperson.

Laymen give cultic respect rather than personal respect to pastors, and laymen listen to, obey, and fear pastors simply because they are ordained. Certain elements of magic may be feared and practices of simony can arise in this atmosphere.¹⁵

Another element of Korean shamanism is a nearsighted realism; a desire to avoid disasters and misfortunes and learn how to lead a wealthy, healthy, long and enjoyable life here on earth. Shamanism has no real concept of morality or ethics, nor any interest in the ultimate meaning of human

¹³ Ki-Baik Lee, A New History of Korea (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1984), 7.

¹⁴ Tong-Shik Ryu, "The Religions of Korea and the Personality of Koreans," Korea Struggles for Christ, ed. Harold Hong (Seoul: KCLS, 1966), 155.

¹⁵ Son, 340.

existence.¹⁶ Thus, both the blessings and curses in shamanism are entirely materialistic. Blessings include wealth, health, long life, and having many sons, while curses include disease, poverty, and failure in business.

To meet shamanistically oriented audience expectations and to attract more people, some preachers overemphasize the benefits of blessings in their sermons. Their message is that all believers will be rich in possessions, healthy in body, and prosperous in their spiritual life. They promise earthly blessings as a direct reward for faith, prayer and sacrifice as demonstrated in financial contributions to the church. At the same time, they put little emphasis on Christian commitment and social responsibility. Again, to please their audience, many preachers conclude every main point of their sermons with the blessing: "I bless you in the name of Jesus." It was precisely this excessive blessing of congregations that led the 65th General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church to adopt a resolution forbidding its pastors to give a "blessing" in the name of Jesus during their sermons. The General Assembly's theological basis for doing so was that preaching is the proclamation of the gospel, not a blessing.¹⁷

Pitfalls of Fundamentalism

Another problem of preaching in Korea is the assumption by some fundamentalistic preachers that the mere repetition of biblical terms and the mere explication of biblical texts can constitute good biblical preaching. They insist that one should preach Scriptura sola, Scriptura tota, and Sola cum

¹⁶ Ryu, "The Religions of Korea and the Personality of Koreans," 155.

¹⁷ I-Tae Kim, "Hankuk Kangdan ueh Chuiyakjum" [The weakness of the Korean church's pulpit], Pastoral Monthly 5 (Feb. 1981): 22.

verbo.¹⁸ However, their emphasis on Scriptura sola and Scriptura tota tends to create a fundamentalistic understanding of the Bible, often leading them to completely disregard the contemporary context. Some of the fundamentalists go so far as to insist that even the illustrations used in the sermon must come from the Bible itself. Biblical criticism or any insight from social science or other sources is regarded as dangerous to true biblical preaching. Fundamentalistic Korean preachers do not believe that the Bible is a historically transmitted and contextualized book.

... not only does the revelation of the Bible arise out of specific historical contexts but also ... the texts were subsequently arranged and appropriated by Israel and the church to meet changing and emerging contexts of the people of God in other times and places.¹⁹

Korean fundamentalistic preachers, therefore, if they are to preach Biblically, need to know that the Bible is a historical and contextual book. They also need to assume the exegetical and hermeneutical task of "uncovering and rediscovering the originating and continuing interpretative context for the text."²⁰ Otherwise, they will become the type of preacher Harry Emerson Fosdick once described: "Only the preacher proceeds still upon the idea that folk come to church desperately anxious to discover what happened to the Jebusites."²¹

¹⁸ Boo-Wong Yoo, Sungshujerk Sulkyo wa Hankuk Kyohoe Kangdan [Biblical preaching and its application to the pulpit of the Korean church] (Seoul: Moonhak Yesulsa, 1984), 125.

¹⁹ William H. Willimon, Integrative Preaching (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 17.

²⁰ Willimon, 17.

²¹ Harry Emerson Fosdick, The Living of These Days (New York: Harper, 1956), 92.

Fundamentalistic preachers run the risk of irrelevance and archaism if they assume that simply by expounding a biblical text they have preached a truly biblical sermon. The message of preaching must be drawn from Scripture, but it must also be directed to contemporary men and women. As Barth says, the preacher must stand between Scylla and Charybdis--between the Bible and the human predicament.

I sought to find my way between the problem of human life on the one hand and the content of the Bible on the other. As a minister I wanted to speak to the people in the infinite contradiction of their life, but to speak the no less infinite message of the Bible, which was as much of a riddle as life. Often enough these two magnitudes, life and the Bible, have risen before me (still rise!) like Scylla and Charybdis.²²

If Korean fundamentalistic preachers continue to disregard the congregational context, they will only turn away many intellectuals and young people from the strange new world within the Bible and the church. The preacher's role is not simply to present the ideas of the Bible in biblical terms, but he must expound the text and apply its message in ways specifically directed to his congregation.

Thus, the most urgent task confronting the Korean Protestant church is to rediscover genuine biblical preaching. To do this, the preacher has to engage in the serious business of exegesis, hermeneutics, and theologizing. Otherwise, preachers will simply use the text as a launching pad for what they want to say, or read into the Bible their own private opinions and preach them as the Word of God. Worse, if it will help them to build bigger churches, they will syncretize the biblical message with pagan ideas and secular ideologies.

²² Karl Barth, The Word of God and the Word of Man, trans. Douglas Horton (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 100.

CHAPTER 2

Theology as Conscience and Critic of Korean Preaching

Is Preaching Without Theology Possible?

Edward F. Markquart asserts that theology is an essential part of every sermon. "It is impossible to have a nontheological sermon. No matter what its shape or form, every sermon is laced with theological presuppositions and prejudices."¹ Therefore, one of the responsibilities of preachers is to identify the theological hermeneutics that governs their preaching. For those who belong to the Lutheran tradition, the sermon's main emphasis would be on a justifying word; for Calvinists, it would be on a saving word with an instructional sense and with an added emphasis on the third use of the law; and for Wesleyans, it would be on sanctification and holiness. Some preachers may stress the high Christology of the Gospel of John or the epistle to the Hebrews; others, the servant Christology of Mark. Some may see creation as basically good, and others may see the world as an evil that should be denied. Whatever their viewpoint may be, preachers need to examine what kind of theology is operating in their interpretation of texts and in their presentation of the gospel.²

Unfortunately, in Korea one can easily find preachers who like to boast; "I am an evangelist. I don't preach theology. I only preach the Bible." As E. C.

¹ Edward F. Markquart, Quest for Better Preaching (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), 69.

² William J. Carl III, Preaching Christian Doctrine (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 5-6; Robert W. Duke, The Sermon as God's Word (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 11-12.

Rust pointed out, "This is like a medical doctor insisting: 'I don't believe in all this anatomy and physiology. I am a quack.'" ³

Although preachers are commissioned to preach Christ and not theology, they must help others to clearly understand Christ, and this requires serious theological reflection. Therefore, preaching and theology cannot be separated. And all Christian preaching is inevitably theological and doctrinal. The preacher who delivers a sermon in the pulpit is presenting some theology or doctrine, whether or not he or she is aware of it.

This being understood, why is preaching divorced from theology? Korean theologians have been partly at fault. Thus far, theology in Korea has been largely a matter of importing the newest theologies from Germany or the United States. Over the last few decades, the theologies of existentialism, laity, new hermeneutic, culture, indigenization, the death of God, hope, ecology, play, story, process, feminists and liberation have been introduced in rapid succession without any consideration of the Korean context. Korean theologians have been quite busy writing about Western theologies, but failed to contextualize them in the Korean church context. Thus, for the average Korean preacher or member of the laity, theology was unintelligible, abstract, and irrelevant. It had nothing to do with the average Korean believer's Christian faith or real-life situation.

Another reason for the exclusion of theology from Korean preaching is the growing influence of the charismatic movement. The phenomenal Korean Movement of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues have reinforced both the anti-intellectual and anti-theological tendency of Korean Protestant churches.

³ E. C. Rust, "Theology and Preaching," Review and Expositor 52 (April 1955): 146.

Theology is being regarded as an obstacle to a full and immediate experience of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues.⁴ The leading charismatic leader, Yonggi Cho, defines liberal theology as the modern equivalent of the devil. According to Cho, the devil, who tempted Adam and Eve in Eden concerning the authority of the Word of God, is still trying to tempt us with liberal theology.

Once I was sick in mind by in-depth reading of some famous theologian's books. At that time my strong conviction on the authority of the Word of God was impaired. My mind was clouded with quasi knowledge, my prayer life ceased, and the growth of my church had stopped.⁵

The influence of pragmatism also contributed to the separation of theology from preaching. For many preachers, theology does not work for church growth. They would rather say that "I have seen much spectacular growth of the church through the power of the Holy Spirit, but I have never seen a church that has grown through theology." Thus, many preachers believe that all they need is to go to a retreat center in the mountains to pray for the receiving of the Holy Spirit.⁶

The exclusion of theology from Korean Protestant preaching, however, has brought chaos, turmoil, and a profusion of unbiblical elements. Without

⁴ Wan-Sang Han, "Kyohoe ueh Yangjuk Kub Sungjangeh Daehan SahoejakjerK Kochal," [A sociological study of the rapid church growth], Hankuk Kyohoe SungRyung Undongeuh HyunSang kwa Kujo, [Korean churches' Holy Spirit movement: Its phenomenology and structure], ed. KCA (Seoul: Korean Christian Academy, 1982), 225.

⁵ Paul Yonggi Cho, Sungkong jerK Kyohoe Sungjang Yulshe [Key to the successful church growth] (Seoul: Young San, 1980), 38.

⁶ Shi-Won Park, "Mokhoe Hyunchang kwa Shinhak Hyunchang" [The contexts of ministry and theology], Christian Thought 31 (Oct. 1987): 36.

theology, preachers began to adopt many kinds of methods or ideologies for church expansion and numerical growth. Without theology, Korean preachers can easily syncretize Christianity with shamanism and other religious ideologies. C. S. Lewis writes of a man who disdained theology because he once experienced God when out alone in the desert at night. Lewis answers such criticism in this way:

Now in a sense I quite agreed with that man. I think he'd probably had a real experience of God in the desert. And when he turned from that experience to the Christian creeds, I think he was really turning from something quite real to something less real. In the same way, if a man once looked at the Atlantic from the beach, and then goes and looks at a map of the Atlantic, he also will be turning from something more real to something less real: turning from real waves to a bit of coloured paper. But here comes the point. The map is only coloured paper, but there are two things you have to remember about it. In the first place, it is based on what hundreds and thousands of people have found out by sailing the real Atlantic. In that way it has behind it masses of experience just as real as the one you could have from the beach; only while yours would be a single isolated glimpse, the map fits all those different experiences together. In the second place, if you want to go anywhere, the map is absolutely necessary. As long as you're content with walks on the beach, your own glimpses are far more fun than looking at a map. But the map is going to be more use than walks on the beach, if you want to get to America. Now, Theology is like the map.⁷

Lewis's metaphor could not be more to the point, for theology is indeed a kind of map, a map based on the real experiences of the many faithful who have really been in touch with God. Without theology, preaching will go astray, because "proclamation without theology is blind."⁸ Korean Protestant

⁷ C. S. Lewis, "Beyond Personality," Mere Christianity (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 135-36, as quoted in Ronald E. Sleeth, Proclaiming the Word (Nashville: Abingdon, 1964), 72-3.

⁸ Gerhard Ebeling, Theology and Proclamation (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 20.

preaching needs a theology that will draw its life from an informed understanding of the gospel. Only then will it be able to correct its unbiblical and pagan elements.

Theology for Preaching

Theology has only one reason to exist: to serve the church in its task of proclaiming the gospel. As Barth puts it:

Proclamation is required as the execution of God's command to the church. Dogmatics is required because proclamation is a fallible human work [Whether preaching] is done in truth and purity Dogmatics serves preaching by raising this question. It tests the orthodoxy of the contemporary kerygma.⁹

Dogmatics is the servant of Church proclamation.¹⁰

It is the duty of theology, as Barth sees it, to reflect and comment critically on the church's proclamation of the gospel. It assesses the way the church proclaims the Word to see whether it remains faithful to the witnesses of Scripture. Theology is thus indispensable to authentic preaching. "It exercises a supervisory office with regard to the church's gospel proclamation for it concerns itself with the themes that are to be preached."¹¹ Without this supervision and continuing theological reflection, preaching will be simply a mirror of the latest fads and fashions and unbiblical elements. Thus, Heinrich Ott writes:

⁹ Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, vol. 1/1, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 82.

¹⁰ Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, vol. 1/1, trans. G. T. Thompson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936), 92.

¹¹ Heinrich Ott, Theology and Preaching (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), 31.

Dogmatics is the conscience of preaching and ... preaching ... is the heart and soul of dogmatics. In order to be able to preach at all well, the preacher must engage in dogmatic reflection That preacher who proposed to be nothing other than a preacher and to leave dogmatic thinking to the specialist in dogma would be a bad preacher, a preacher without heart and conscience. And the dogmatist who proposed to be nothing other than a dogmatist and to leave to the pastor the concern with the practical task of church preaching would be a bad church teacher.¹²

When a preacher delivers a highly interesting sermon with negligible or erroneous theology, he or she needs to be reminded of Heinrich Ott's saying that theology is the conscience of preaching. Theology makes preachers accountable for the Word they proclaim. And theology serves as "conscience of preaching" by raising such questions as these:

Have you been faithful to the tradition of which Scripture is the primary witness? Have the words of your sermon given expression to that unique Word of which you as preacher are the servant, or have they merely been echoes of voices from your own psyche or the surrounding culture?¹³

In order to preach a biblical sermon, the preacher must have a faith that has fully absorbed the basic Christian doctrine. And the core of Christian doctrine is the gospel: the joyous announcement of what God has done for our salvation in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The preacher must believe it and internalize it.

In a sense, the whole of Scripture is distilled into the great and essential affirmations of the faith: God is one; God creates, sustains, judges, and redeems creation; God loves all persons but at the same time calls for ethical earnestness and responsible relationships among us; creation, history, and prophets reveal God, but in

¹² Ott, 22.

¹³ Herman G. Stuempfle, Jr., Preaching Law and Gospel (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 12.

Jesus of Nazareth, crucified, risen, and glorified, God is known supremely; God's Spirit dwells with the faithful community to comfort, guide, correct, and purify; God is not only the source but the end and meaning of all life which is purposefully moving toward God's good and final purpose.¹⁴

If these basic theological affirmations have penetrated the preacher's mind and have become a part of his or her own faith, they will serve as a standard by which to measure not only one's own preaching but the preaching of others.

An important function of theology is to be concerned with the understanding of the whole. It enables the preacher to see the passage not only in its own context, but also in the light of the whole witness of Scripture. Preaching arises from a specific text and a specific pastoral situation, but it has to unfold the total truth of the gospel, in all its particularity:

The particular sermon is like the smaller part of the iceberg that is visible above the water; the rest, the totality of the kerygma committed to the Church, floats sustainingly beneath the surface of the water. This symbolizes dogmatic reflection of the wholeness of the doctrine which sustains and enfolds the particular sermon.¹⁵

In each sermon, the preacher will know and be able to demonstrate how each passage fits into the overall structure of biblical revelation and with the greater theological whole. The preacher should be able to see the passage in the light of the center, which is the gospel.

Another function of theology is to help the preacher distinguish between the important and the trivial. Too many sermons seem to err, not on the issue of truth, but in the area of small issues or topics.

¹⁴ Fred B. Craddock, Preaching (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 145.

¹⁵ Ott, 27.

Theology urges upon the pulpit a much larger agenda: creation, evil, grace, covenant, forgiveness, judgment, suffering, care of the earth and all God's creatures, justice, love and the reconciliation of the world to God. It is not out of order for theology to ask of preaching, What ultimate vision is held before us? Are there words, deeds, and relationships by which we can move toward that vision?¹⁶

A sermon with theological depth will not bore the listeners. As Ian Pitt-Watson suggests, the preacher who has made the church's core theology his own possession and thus thoroughly understands the biblical and theological tradition of the church, will be able to make the gospel both more vivid and more relevant to the congregation.¹⁷ Therefore, it is a serious mistake for the preacher to think that he cannot be interesting if he is theological. Theology is the most important subject matter there is, and if the preacher cannot make it interesting, it is his fault and not the fault of theology.

The preacher who complains that he is not a theologian cannot absolve himself of his responsibility for the theological content of his sermon. If he tries to avoid theologizing in his preaching, he will not eliminate theology, but will open the door to bad theology--and that can only mean a distortion of the living Word that it is the preacher's duty to proclaim. The parish preacher must be a biblical scholar and church theologian in residence. The preacher has been called to announce the good news and to show what it should mean in the daily lives of the congregation. But only the preacher who is solidly grounded in the theology of the historical church does so. As the theologian-in-residence to the local congregation, the pastor must impart not only faith,

¹⁶ Craddock, Preaching, 49.

¹⁷ Ian Pitt-Watson, Preaching: A Kind of Folly (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 34.

but understanding. Thus, Joseph C. Hough, Jr. and John B. Cobb, Jr. argue that the church of the future needs practical theologians as its ministers.¹⁸

¹⁸ Joseph C. Hough, Jr. and John B. Cobb, Jr., Christian Identity and Theological Education (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985), 118.

CHAPTER 3

Toward Biblical Preaching

The Place of the Bible in Korean Churches

Koreans are book-respecting people. Among other things, they have highly honored the canons of Buddhism and Confucianism for the last 1,500 years. During the eleventh century, Koreans completed the carving of wooden blocks for printing the complete Tripitaka (Buddhist scripture) in the pious hope of securing the protection of Buddha for their nation. They firmly believed that the Buddhist canon would bring prosperity and security.¹ For many centuries, Koreans also honored the four major books and the five sacred books of the Chinese classics, which provided the basis for Confucianism. In fact, it was not unusual for Koreans to begin reading the Chinese classics at four or five years of age under the guidance of their parents. When they reached a certain age, they began to learn their concepts through an oral exegetical commentary by their teachers in the village school. The method of Confucian learning was thoroughly textual; it involved constant reading and studying until, eventually, the child had memorized the entire text.

With this cultural background and tradition, one should not be surprised to find that the Bible has become "the center of everything in the Korean Church."² One might say the coming of the Bible into Korea marked the

¹ Woo-Keun Han, The History of Korea (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1974), 143.

² A. M. Chirgwin, The Bible in World Evangelism (London: SCM Press, 1954), 84.

beginning of the Korean Protestant churches. When the first two American career missionaries, H. G. Underwood (Presbyterian) and H. G. Appenzeller (Methodist), landed at Inchon in 1885, they were able to bring with them the Korean Bible, which was already partially translated.³

The translation of the Korean Bible had been started almost simultaneously in Manchuria, China, and Japan. John Ross, a Scottish Presbyterian minister who was doing his missionary work in nearby Manchuria, took a keen interest in mission work in Korea, an interest stimulated by his meetings with young Korean scholars. Thus, Ross undertook the task of translating the Scriptures into Korean with the help of five newly converted and baptized Confucian scholars: Lee Ung-Chan, Lee Sung-Ha, Kim Jin-Ki, Paik Hong-Joon, and Suh Sang-Yun. By the end of 1883, the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles had been translated and published. In 1887, the complete text of the New Testament was translated and 3,000 copies were published. One of the newly converted scholars, Suh Sang-Yun, secretly brought Gospel tracts into his home in Solrae, Hwang hae Province, and his enthusiastic mission work produced many Christian converts even before the American missionaries arrived in Korea.⁴

Meanwhile, another translation was also going forward in Japan. Lee Su-Jung, a converted Confucian scholar, was the prime mover in Japan. Working with Chinese and Japanese Bibles, he began translating the Scriptures into Korean for the American Bible Society. He first translated the Gospel of Mark, then completed the Gospel of Luke in the following year. As a

³ Kyung-Bae Min, Hankuk Kidok Kyohoe Sa [A history of the Korean Christian church] (Seoul: KCLS, 1982), 171.

⁴ Min, 171-72.

result, "when the first ordained American missionaries coming to Korea through Japan had in their hands that Gospel in the Korean language,"⁵ they were surprised to learn that there were already newly converted Christians and that the Ross translation had been circulated and read by Koreans. Thus, Professor Lee Chang-Shik believes that Koreans could have become Christians simply by reading the Scriptures even without the work of the missionaries.⁶ The experience was much the same with Korean Catholicism. A century before Protestantism was introduced to Korea, many prominent Confucian scholars had been converted to Catholicism by doctrinal and catechetical books that had been brought from China. Lee Ki-Baik, a noted Korean historian, comments that "it was not through the proselytizing of Western missionaries but rather on their own, through reading treatises brought back from China like First Steps in Catholic Doctrine, that these Korean Catholics developed a profound interest in the new religion."⁷

Thus, the beginnings of Korean Protestantism were closely related to the introduction of the Bible. Not surprisingly, considering Korea's scholarly tradition, Korean Christians developed a great affection for the text and became "Bible-reading people." It is often said that no other Christians surpass Korean believers in their knowledge of the Bible. They can cite chapter and verse. To memorize certain passages or even entire books is regarded as a simple expression of one's faith. Korean Christians have never

⁵ George L. Paik, The History of Protestant Missions in Korea, 1832-1910 (Seoul: Yonsei Univ. Press, 1971), 79.

⁶ Chang-Shik Lee, 89.

⁷ Ki-Baik Lee, 239.

been ashamed to carry a Bible or hymnal in public no matter how conspicuous it made them.⁸

The Sakyung Hoe (Bible conference) is a well-known Korean phenomenon. Once or twice a year, for several days at a time, Christians gather for intensive Bible study under the guidance of famous teachers. C. A. Clark reported on this phenomenon at the Madras Conference of the International Missionary Council in 1938:

The heart of the Korean work is the Bible Class system. Every [congregation] has a "Bible Class" at least once, sometimes twice a year ... usually lasts a week Each day begins with a daylight devotional prayer meeting around 5 A.M. or earlier. During the day ... the people together study the Bible. In the evening they have the old-fashioned Moody type of revival service.⁹

Thus, the International Missionary Council observed in its 1938 reports that at the heart of the miraculous growth of the Korean church was the regular study of the Bible.¹⁰

Unfortunately, however, Korean Christians' love of the Bible became the worship of the Bible, turning it into an object of faith instead of seeing it as the testimony of the primary witnesses to God's revelation in Jesus Christ. The words of Karl Barth were true for many Korean Christians; "The Bible was now grounded upon itself apart from the mystery of Christ and the Holy Ghost. It became a 'paper pope.'" ¹¹ Biblical literalism was soon to be made a

⁸ Harold Hong, "General Pictures of the Korean Church, Yesterday and Today," Korea Struggles for Christ, ed. Harold Hong, 18.

⁹ Kim Tuk-Yul, "Development of Christian Education in Korea," Korea Struggles for Christ, ed. Harold Hong, 80.

¹⁰ Chirgwin, 84-5.

¹¹ Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, vol. 1/2, trans. G. T. Thompson and Harold Knight (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956), 525.

dogma, and those who did not subscribe to mechanical verbal inspiration were considered heretics. Until recently, an extremely rigid form of biblical fundamentalism has been the predominant theological standard. And the Korean heritage of loving and honoring the text has become a fundamentalist dogma.

However, the inerrancy debate that dominated and caused many schisms in the Korean churches from the 1940s to the early 1960s has receded. Since the late 1970s, there has been a fresh and growing enthusiasm for Bible study. Numerous Bible classes have been started and Korean Christians are now rediscovering their traditional love and respect for Scripture, freed from the shackles of rigid Biblicism. In light of the Korean church's textual tradition, it seems that Korean preaching should be textual and biblically-oriented.

Elements of Biblical Preaching

Since Korean Christians have a deep respect for the Sacred Canon of the church through their cultural tradition, every preacher, whether he is a fundamentalist, evangelical, liberal or charismatic, claims that he is preaching a truly textual and biblical sermon. And there is great confusion about what constitutes a biblical sermon.

The test for a biblical sermon is not how much Bible is used, or how much the preacher talks about the Bible, and not even whether the main points or subpoints come from the text. "The test for a biblical sermon is whether the insight of the Word expressed in the passage in that day becomes insight and Word for us in ours."¹² An important factor for biblical preaching is that the content and function of the text remain authentic in the sermon.

¹² Ronald E. Sleeth, God's Word and Our Words (Atlanta: John Knox, 1986), 53.

Preaching is truly biblical when (a) the Bible governs the content of the sermon and when (b) the function of the sermon is analogous to that of the text. In other words, preaching is biblical when it imparts a Bible-shaped word in a Bible-like way.¹³

Biblical Content

Biblical preaching should be theocentric rather than anthropocentric, because the Bible is concerned primarily with God. Even though stories of men and women fill the greater part of the Bible, the real center and hero is God. Therefore, a sermon that concentrates entirely on examples of human character in the text is, in spite of all its good intentions, basically unbiblical. It usually amounts to little else than a moralizing address.¹⁴

In contrast to anthropocentric interpretation, therefore, theocentric interpretation would emphasize that the Bible's purpose is first of all to tell the story of God Hence, when preachers pass on the biblical story, they ought to employ biblical characters the way the Bible employs them, not as ethical models, not as heroes for emulation or examples for warning, but as people whose story has been taken up into the Bible in order to reveal what God is doing for and through them.¹⁵

Biblical preaching also must be Christocentric. This aspect represents not an addition to the theocentric nature of biblical preaching, but rather constitutes its accentuation and focalization.¹⁶ Christocentric preaching is the preaching of God's revelation from the perspective of the New Testament.

¹³ Leander E. Keck, The Bible in the Pulpit (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), 106.

¹⁴ Klaas Runia, The Sermon Under Attack (Exeter, England: Paternoster, 1983), 54.

¹⁵ Sidney Greidanus, The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 117-18.

¹⁶ Runia, 55.

Since the New Testament teaches throughout that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of Old Testament history, promises, and prophecies, an Old Testament passage is interpreted not only in its own horizon but also in the broader horizon of the whole canon.¹⁷

A biblical sermon should be good news. According to Heinrich Ott, biblical preaching must speak realistically and convincingly about man's sins and predicament, and it must speak concretely about man's obligation toward God's grace. But at the center of all preaching, there must be the joyous announcement that, in Jesus Christ, God has come to us for our redemption. Biblical sermons will not follow this scheme all the time. The balance among the three elements will be affected by the text as well as by the context of the preaching situation.

But in principle the sermon as a whole has just three things to say. Its center lies in the middle point, in the proclamation of God's action. But in order to be intelligible and effective, the proclamation needs the other two parts, the disclosure of the true situation and the emphasis on the resulting obligation.¹⁸

A sermon that does nothing more than expose the believer's guilt or analyze his plight is not a biblical sermon. It will serve only to deepen his despair or increase his guilt. The preacher's task is not that of a prosecuting attorney whose objective is to seek a verdict of "guilty." Rather, his role is like that of a surgeon who must cut in order to heal the patient.¹⁹ Luther once warned that preachers who are so preoccupied with the law that they neglect the preaching of the Gospel are guilty of "wounding and not binding up,

¹⁷ Greidanus, 119.

¹⁸ Ott, 53.

¹⁹ Stuempfle, 31-2.

smiting and not healing, killing and not making alive, leading down into hell and not bringing back again, humbling and not exalting."²⁰ In a biblical sermon, the preaching of the law has to be stressed in the context of the gospel.

Since we often pervert the gift of freedom from sin into the license of freedom to sin, in a biblical sermon the hearer has to hear the call to obedience. We need to remember, though, that when we speak of what we ought to do, our moral imperative must flow from our knowledge of what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. Otherwise, our imperatives are no more than pious moralizing that will inflict heavy burdens of guilt upon the hearers. This is particularly true for the Korean pulpit where moralizing imperatives often dominate the indicative nature of the gospel. Professor Chung Chang-Bok comments:

In our Confucian culture, our relationship with others is vertical rather than horizontal. The superior or the older often omits the "subject" and uses the imperative "verb" so often in his conversation with the inferior and the younger The relationship between the preachers and the congregation is also vertical. Thus, many of the Korean preachers always give orders to the listeners in their sermons. And they give orders to their congregation as if it is a command of God.²¹

Many Korean preachers, especially the conservatives, misunderstand the nature of the gospel. The gospel is first of all indicative. Imperative and instruction follow indicative. Korean preachers need to place the indicative and the imperative in proper relationship. As Ian Pitt-Watson says, "At heart

²⁰ Stuempfle, 45.

²¹ Chang-Bok Chung, "Hankuk Sulkyo ueh Juerhwa Jongkyul Urhui Moonje" [The problem of the subject and ending in Korean preaching], Shinhak Chunchu [Theological Times], 21 Feb. 1987: 2.

preaching is about what ' God has done: by sending his own Son in a form like that of our own sinful nature' (Rom. 8:3). That is the gospel."²² Biblical preaching must be good news.

Biblical Precedent

According to Leander Keck, in a biblical sermon the Bible must govern the content of the sermon, and the function of the sermon should be analogous to that of the text.²³ In other words, the biblical preacher has to ask, "Does the sermon say and do what the biblical text says and does?"²⁴

The preacher will want to be clear not only about what is being said in the sermon, but also what is being done in the sermon. And just as one's message is informed by what the text is saying, the sermon's function is informed by what the text is doing.²⁵

Often the form of the text is the hermeneutical key to what a text is doing. Thus, if the preacher wants his sermon to do what the text intends to do, he must be attentive to the form of the text, "because every text may intend differently, requires different designing, and begs to fulfill different purposes."²⁶ The Bible includes a wealth of literary forms: metaphors, psalms, proverbs, miracle stories, parables, prophetic oracles, short stories, allegories, sagas, history and others. While the sermon form need not be a slavish imitation of the form of a text, the preacher should not move too far

²² Ian Pitt-Watson, A Primer for Preachers (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 21.

²³ Keck, 106.

²⁴ Craddock, Preaching, 28.

²⁵ Craddock, Preaching, 123.

²⁶ David Buttrick, "Interpretation and Preaching," Interpretation 35 (Jan. 1981): 58.

from the form of the text. If the text is a hymn of praise, it says "Praise God!" and wants to evoke that impact from the hearers. "But if the sermon is the result of boiling down this poetic text to some abstract idea, the sermon is not really preaching the text."²⁷ Therefore, a poetic text needs to be preached differently from an historical account. And if the text is a parable, the sermon ought to retain some narrative quality.

To preach the way the Bible does, the preacher also needs to know what kind of hermeneutic was used by the biblical writers. Professor James A. Sanders identifies two basic hermeneutic modes, namely (1) the constitutive and (2) the prophetic.

The hermeneutic of God's freedom as Creator of all the world and of all humankind may be called the hermeneutic of prophetic critique. The hermeneutic of God's grace and commitment to the promises made as the peculiar and particular Redeemer of one ongoing community or group may be called constitutive hermeneutics. The one hermeneutic stresses God's role as Creator of all and the other tends to emphasize God's role as Redeemer of a particular group; the one focuses on the doctrine of creation and the other on the doctrine of redemption.²⁸

The constitutive hermeneutic is based on a supportive interpretation of the Word. It gives a word of affirmation to the community that is in danger of losing its sense of identity and that may even be doubting the reality of the promises of God. This community needs priestly support.

²⁷ William H. Willimon, Preaching and Leading Worship (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 68-9.

²⁸ James A. Sanders, God Has A Story Too (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 15.

At those historical moments when Israel was weak and needed reconstituting, the Bible in its canonical shape seems to indicate that the constitutive mode was proper: our father Jacob was a wandering Aramaean (Deut. 26:5); we are lost and wandering like him (in Exile); maybe like him we mark another beginning and not the end of Israel.²⁹

The prophetic hermeneutic, on the other hand, is a challenging word to the community that has strayed from its divine calling and purpose and that needs to be recalled to its true mission. Often, such a community believes that it is elected and privileged but is not living up to what that means. This community needs a word of judgment and a call to repentance. The prophetic hermeneutic seeks not to constitute but to reconstitute.

But if [the constitutive] mode of rereading the tradition about Jacob, or Abraham, was read at a time when Israel had power, and had somehow confused it with God's power, then Jeremiah and Ezekiel, as well as the other prophets, called it false prophecy. To continue to draw strength from the tradition would only harden the heart into further irresponsibility. At that historical moment the prophetic mode is indicated: it may be we must wander, once more, like Jacob long enough to rediscover our true identity.³⁰

Sanders believes that any passage of the Scripture can be interpreted either way according to the hermeneutic employed--whether it is the hermeneutic of prophetic critique stressing God's freedom, or the hermeneutic of constitutive support stressing God's grace according to the context.³¹ For biblical writers, the context of the community was the determining factor for deciding which hermeneutic mode would be used. The misreading of the

²⁹ James A. Sanders, "Hermeneutics," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, suppl. vol. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 405.

³⁰ Sanders, "Hermeneutics," 405.

³¹ Sanders, God Has A Story Too, 16-17.

context by the interpreter usually led to use of the constitutive hermeneutic mode when a prophetic mode was necessary, or vice versa.

Along with these two modes of hermeneutics, Professors Hayes and Holladay add the "advisory" reading of the text. The advisory hermeneutic has as its goal the offering of instruction, wisdom, or insight without the overt desire either to confirm the present conditions or to call for reconstitution or reformation. The advisory hermeneutics seek to illuminate from the wisdom of traditions or from the sage rather than to create conditions. Such illumination, however, may open up a new perspective, which can in turn lead to reconstitution.³² Thus, we can find three modes of reading the text and traditions that were used by the biblical writers.

Broadly speaking, a text and its message can function in at least three ways: constitutively, prophetically, or advisably. These three functions may be related to the three basic forms of ministry: priest, prophetic, and sage (or teacher) Just as the various factions of ministry overlap and were and are frequently embodied in the same person or in a single act of ministry, so also a single text or tradition may function in more than one fashion depending on the manner and context of its usage.³³

The interpretative task of today's preacher is to assess the need of the congregation. Does it require constitutive support or prophetic challenge or instruction? This analysis of the congregation will determine whether one preaches constitutively, prophetically or advisably.

³² John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, Biblical Exegesis (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 125.

³³ Hayes and Holladay, 124.

Falsehood enters in when a biblical passage or ancient tradition is brought to bear upon a context where it could either comfort cruel people (by stressing God's grace when they needed to hear a challenge) or quench a dimly burning wick (by stressing God's freedom when they needed to hear of comfort and support).³⁴

Sanders provides a theological plumb line with which to check the appropriateness of our interpretation. "Whenever we can be confident, we have misread it."³⁵ On the other hand, our sense of discomfort with a passage may be a confirmation that we have read it accurately. Biblical preachers should pay attention to the forms of the text and to the kinds of hermeneutics used by the biblical writers.

Three Dominant Types of Contemporary Korean Preaching

One can distinguish three major types of preaching in the contemporary Korean Protestant church. Expository preaching is potentially the strongest. Its emergence in Korea is surprisingly new. It has been enthusiastically received by Korean preachers only since the early years of the last decade. Numerous workshops and seminars on expository preaching have attracted tens of thousands of pastors. Also, many articles and books on the subject have been published. Unfortunately, many believe that the expository sermon is the only biblical sermon. What its proponents do not seem to recognize is that a preacher will not automatically preach a genuine biblical sermon simply by adopting the expository preaching style. An unbiblical sermon is as possible in the expository mode of preaching as in any other type of preaching.

A second strong current in Korean preaching is the message of the threefold blessing in the charismatic tradition. Paul Yonggi Cho is the chief

³⁴ Sanders, God Has A Story Too, 17.

³⁵ Sanders, "Hermeneutics," 407.

proponent of this message. Since he has the largest congregation in the world, claiming the astronomical figure of 600,000 members, Cho understandably has a major influence on Korean preaching. Many aspiring preachers, who also dream of building a mega-church, indiscriminately adopt Cho's sermon in both message and style, as well as his theology.

The third stream in the contemporary Korean church is prophetic preaching. It is a minority voice, best represented by the minjung theologians and preachers concerned about social justice, human rights, democratization, and peacemaking. It is vitally important that such a truly faithful prophetic message be heard. However, prophetic preaching is unpopular with many preachers for the simple reason that they do not think it will help them build a large church.

In the following three chapters, these three currents of contemporary Protestant preaching in Korea will be discussed in the light of two elements of biblical sermons: biblical content and function. Special attention will be given to biblical exegesis, hermeneutics, and theology.

CHAPTER 4

Expository Preaching

Introduction

Today, the expository sermon is perhaps the most influential and respected type of sermon in Korea. Its popularity is interdenominational and widely acclaimed and accepted by Korean pastors, especially among preachers in their thirties and forties. Thousands of Korean pastors now participate in expository sermon workshops and seminars. Even laypersons are talking about expository sermons, and many believe that, if the sermon is not expository, it is not biblical.¹

The emergence of expository preaching in Korea corresponds to the Korean churches' renewed interest in Bible studies. When the phenomenal charismatic and mystical movement of the 1960s and 1970s peaked, Korean churches began to rediscover their traditional love for the Scriptures.² The Korean Holy Spirit movement has emphasized the ecstatic inner experience at the expense of the Word and the sacraments. However, many Korean churches in recent years began to rediscover the Reformers' theology, which believes that "the first work of the Holy Spirit is the outward one of

¹ Jung-Ku Park, "Hankuk Kyohoewa Sulkyo Kaengshin," [Korean church and renewal of preaching: A symposium], Pastoral Monthly 11 (Jan. 1987): 30-44.

² Gap-Shik Sung, "Hankuk Kyohoeh Sungkyung Kongbu," [Korean churches' Bible study: A symposium], Christian Thought 27 (Oct. 1981): 12-82.

proclaiming the Word and administering the sacraments and that the inner work of the Holy Spirit is secondary and only comes after the first."³

Since the early 1980s, Bible study groups have flowered in local churches. They have also blossomed in factories, business offices, hospitals, military bases, and colleges and universities. And many preachers have begun using Bible study materials from Bethel, Crossway, Jensen, Navigator, and Campus Crusade for Christ together with their denominational materials. Through this movement, which now affects the entire spectrum of Korean churches, many preachers began to see the full possibilities of biblical preaching as employed in the expository type of sermon.⁴

Expository preaching is quite new to Korean churches. When the missionaries came to Korea in 1884, they typically preached a simple topical message that could be easily understood by new Korean converts.⁵ Accordingly, topical sermons remained the dominant type of sermon until the mid-1970s. Also, until recently, biblical concordances, Greek and Hebrew dictionaries and other materials required for intensive Bible studies were not available to Korean preachers. Hong Jung-Gil, one of the most influential expository preachers, shares his personal experience:

³ William Horden, Experience and Faith (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1983), 98.

⁴ Jong-Soon Park, Kyohoe Sungjang kwa Sungkyung Kongbu [A study of the influence of Bible study on church growth] (Seoul: Hae Sun Publ., 1984).

⁵ Won-Kye Kim, "Kangdan Guneke Yangdaerul Matkilsu Upda," [We can't leave our sheep to pulpiteers], Koshin Monthly, Sept. 1984: 25-6.

In the pastoral ministry I experienced the limitation of the topical sermon. And I realized that the pastor's sermon should be expository style. Regrettably, seminary homiletics classes do not clearly teach and give any help on expository sermon-making. Thus I have to rely on self-study. I had a conversion experience by reading Martyn Lloyd-Jones' expository "Sermon on the Mount" and "Preaching and Preachers." Dennis Lane and John Stott also strongly influenced me in my search for expository preaching.⁶

There has been a great difference of opinion and much confusion, however, about exactly what constitutes expository preaching. Some define it as a type of sermon with many biblical passages. Andrew Blackwood says that an expository sermon is based on "a Bible passage longer than two or three consecutive verses."⁷ According to Blackwood, an expository sermon differs from a textual sermon primarily in the length of the Bible passage. Others define the expository sermon as a "running commentary ... in which the preacher moves through a biblical passage seriatim, interpreting as he goes."⁸ Some have understood the expository sermon to be an exhaustive and extensive

⁶ Jung-Gil Hong, "Sulkyo uh Moonjejumkwa Kanghesulkyo," [Problems of preaching and expository sermon], Mokhoeja wa Sulkyo [The pastor and preaching], ed. Jung-Un Chun (Seoul: Dosuh Chulpan Poongman, 1987), 163-164.

It is surprising to discover that, until the 1970s, there had been only one preaching textbook for Korean theological students and pastors. Lectures on Homiletics, written by American Presbyterian missionary C. A. Clark, had been used as the textbook of preaching for Korean churches until then. It was first published in 1925; the 24th edition was published in 1986. The first major book by a Korean is New Perspectives on Preaching Today, written by Keun-Won Park and published in 1982. A conservative Presbyterian, Joo-Young Lee, published his book, Modern Homiletics, in 1983. Park and Lee list no Korean authors in their bibliographies.

⁷ Andrew Blackwood, Expository Preaching Today (New York: Abingdon, 1953), 13.

⁸ Elizabeth Achtemeier, Creative Preaching (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 72.

report of all the commentaries a preacher has read on a particular passage of Scripture or a lifeless and meaningless recounting of a Bible story.⁹ This type of expository sermon is "so centered on a mere description of detail that it remains basically a B.C. or first century A.D. word far removed from the interests and needs of twentieth-century men and women."¹⁰

However, many evangelical homileticians now propose a broader meaning of the expository method than that of a microscopic and analytic approach to the text, so characteristic of many fundamentalists in the past. Merrill F. Unger argues that the expository sermon is characterized not by the length of the portion treated, whether a single verse or a larger unit, but by the manner of treatment. If the original meaning of the text is made plain and applied to the present-day needs of the hearers, it may properly be said to be expository preaching.¹¹ Farris D. Whitesell lists seven essential components of expository preaching.

1. It is based on a passage in the Bible
2. It seeks to learn the primary, basic meaning of that passage.
3. It relates that meaning to the context of the passage.
4. It digs down for the timeless, universal truth stemming out of the passage.
5. It organizes these truths tightly around one central theme.
6. It uses the rhetorical elements of explanation, argument, illustration, and application to bring the truth of the passage home to the hearer.

⁹ Jerry Vines, A Practical Guide to Sermon Preparation (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 5.

¹⁰ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Toward an Exegetical Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 19-20.

¹¹ Merrill F. Unger, Principles of Expository Preaching (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1955), 33.

7. It seeks to persuade the listener to obey the truth of the passage discussed.¹²

Many believe that an expository sermon obliges the preacher to stay close to the Scriptural text and makes him read, study, question, and wrestle with the text until it reveals itself more fully. Most of the expository preachers will take a book of the Bible, divide it into paragraphs, and preach consecutively from them.

Distillation of a Theme or Idea

Elizabeth Achtemeier observes that the majority of sermons preached today are "thematic." The thematic sermon consists of an introduction, three points and a poem, and a conclusion. As the name implies, it is based upon a theme--one distilled from the text.

The presupposition of such "thematic preaching" in relation to the Bible is that there is a major idea or message which can be distilled out of the text, and the function of biblical criticism for such preaching, then, has been to recover that major theme. That is, biblical criticism has been seen as the necessary tool for uncovering what the text really meant when it was written, and for years it has been the aim of many homiletics teachers to instill in their pupils the necessity of uncovering that actual meaning.¹³

It is assumed that the theme or idea is a digest of what is really important in the text. After the theme is distilled, the preacher will begin to explain, develop and apply it in his sermon. Thematic sermons are either topical or expository. For example, when the preacher goes outside the text to find his points, in order to develop a theme, the sermon is called "topical." In the

¹² Farris D. Whitesell, Power in Expository Preaching (Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, 1963), xv.

¹³ Elizabeth Achtemeier, "The Artful Dialogue," Interpretation 35 (Jan. 1981): 22.

topical sermon, however, the text normally has no real voice in the sermon. The theme is developed using so many other authorities that the text has no chance to exercise its authority upon the hearers. To give authority to the sermon, the points of the sermon are supported mainly by outside authorities--famous celebrities, psychologists, learned scholars, and artists are often quoted if the preacher is liberal. Miraculous healing stories, personal testimony based on an ecstatic experience of the Holy Spirit, and references to the numbers of people saved at revival meetings are often quoted if the preacher is evangelical or conservative.

In the topical sermon, once the theme is distilled from the text, the points of the sermon are usually developed independently. In the more aberrant example, the theme is imposed upon the text. The assumption is that the text has nothing left to offer after it has been squeezed and digested into the theme.¹⁴ Referring to contemporary thematic-topical sermons, Achtemeier says: "It is not the message of the Bible that is being presented, but the sum of the preacher's learning and experience, and while the sermons are well shaped, they cannot claim to mediate the biblical story."¹⁵

When the major points of thematic sermons are derived from the biblical text itself, however, the sermon is "expository."¹⁶ Its outline is not imposed,

¹⁴ Richard C. White, Biblical Preaching (St. Louis: CBP Press, 1988), 19-29.

¹⁵ Achtemeier, Creative Preaching, 63.

¹⁶ Most expository homiletics say that the main points of the sermon must be drawn from the Scripture verses to be preached, but subpoints can be drawn from other Scripture passages. However, some expository fundamentalists, including James Braga, insist that all the subpoints as well as the main points must be derived from the same unit of Scripture to be expounded. See James Braga, How to Prepare Bible Messages, rev. ed. (Portland: Multnomah, 1981), 55.

but grows naturally out of the biblical text. The number of points in an expository sermon varies according to the substance of the passage--usually no less than two and no more than four, and each point is related to another as the preacher unfolds the unifying theme.¹⁷ Since that theme is supported by the major points from the text itself, the expository sermon can convey the claims of the text to the congregation more faithfully than the topical sermon. Thus, Professor Achtemeier comments that "only those ... sermons which derive their major points from the biblical material itself can lay claim to presenting the message of the text."¹⁸

However, the point-making sermons, based on a distilled theme, have been increasingly challenged by homileticians influenced by narrative theology and the new literary criticism. They believe that, in point-making sermons, preachers put the sermon's theme in general, abstract, even aphoristic or moralistic language, thus missing the specific truth claim of the text. Professor White observes:

From the concrete, specific, actual event portrayed in the text, most sermon themes step up and away into the distant realm of Plato's ideas from the concrete, specific, actual event portrayed in the text. They state the universal, not the local and personal, and lead with the timeless, not immediate.¹⁹

They also charge that the point-making sermons ignore the movement and intentionality of the text, by treating the text as if it were there objectively, a static object from which the preacher may get something to preach on. David Buttrick says that, in point-making expository sermons, a distancing

¹⁷ Vines, 112-14.

¹⁸ Achtemeier, Creative Preaching, 63.

¹⁹ White, 57.

of the congregation from the text takes place and sermons easily fall into talking "about" the text rather than speaking "of" the text.²⁰ "The gospel becomes an item for reflection--marvelous item to be sure--rather than an inescapable and overwhelming experience."²¹

However, one cannot completely dismiss the method of distillation of a theme from the text as some homileticians insist. Although there is a danger in treating the text as an abstract and generalized idea, one still needs a theme for a sermon. Without stating the theme of a sermon in one sentence, the preacher does not know where he is going.²² Even for narrative preaching, the theme of a sermon is necessary if it is to edify the hearers.²³ The theme of a sermon will set the direction and keep it from being sidetracked. It will also ensure the sermon's unity and promote movement in the sermon.²⁴

Literary Forms and Expository Preaching

Expository preachers need to incorporate the insights and contributions of narrative theology and the new literary criticism in order to be faithful to

²⁰ Buttrick, "Interpretation and Preaching," 55.

²¹ John Mason Stapleton, Preaching in Demonstration of the Spirit and Power (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 62.

²² Willimon, Preaching and Leading Worship, 68.

²³ George M. Bass, The Song and the Story (Lima, Ohio: C.S.S. Publ., 1984), 109.

²⁴ Greidanus, 139. David Buttrick, Richard L. Eslinger, Eugene L. Lowry and others question the assumption that every sermon should have a theme. However, Fred B. Craddock, William H. Willimon, Paul Scott Wilson and others still recommend stating the theme of the proposed sermon in one sentence.

the claims and intentions of the text. There are a variety of literary genres in the Scripture. The different forms of the text therefore require different treatments for preaching.

Reginald Fuller emphasizes that "the structure of the sermon should be determined by the structure of the pericope."²⁵ This does not mean, however, that the form of the sermon will correspond to the form of the text, but rather that the sermon will manifest the text's essential characteristics. If the text is in narrative form, then the sermon will manifest the characteristics of a narrative. If the text is in the form of poetry, then the sermon will reflect a poetic character.²⁶ For example, a passage from Romans Chapter 6 might be explanatory. If such is the case, the sermon treatment should respect the style, tone, and thrust of Paul's teaching as presented therein. Again, if a passage from 1 Corinthians 15 is argumentative, the exposition should deal with the problem Paul dealt with in settling a particular controversy.²⁷ 1 Chron. 21:18-26 is a historical narrative that unfolds in a sequence of events, interspersed with some theological comments. It moves progressively on a time-line. As a narrative, it has a degree of suspense created by a problem that needs to be solved. The text moves dramatically through a desperate complication to resolution and release.²⁸ A sermon based on this narrative should have a quality of movement, suspense and resolution with theological comments.

²⁵ Reginald H. Fuller, The Use of the Bible in Preaching (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 38.

²⁶ Ronald J. Allen, "Shaping Sermons by the Language of the Text," Preaching Biblically, ed. Don M. Wardlaw (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 35.

²⁷ James Earl Massey, Designing the Sermon (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 23.

²⁸ White, 60.

Many of the expository sermons, however, employ almost a standard form regardless of the literary genres employed in the text. Usually it is a unifying theme or idea supported and developed by three major points drawn from the text with many subpoints. However, Achtemeier asserts that, the more closely the preacher deals with the Scripture, the more narrative his preaching style becomes. The reason is that the biblical message is framed largely in terms of narrative.

Our salvation by God in Jesus Christ is a story, which reaches from Mesopotamia to the new Jerusalem, and even in those portions of the Bible where the message is phrased in affirmations and truth, the context is always that story of what God is speaking and doing in human life.²⁹

The narrative text involves our identification with people in the story and their problems, fears, struggles, and hopes. But many expository sermons talk about the text, its archeological, historical and biblical background. The sermon is static, analytic, abstract, and resembles a classroom lecture. Rather, the sermon should move structurally like a story because there is movement of thought or event in Scripture.³⁰

Jong-Yoon Lee, a scholar-pastor, is an evangelical expository preacher who recently became pastor of Choong Hyun Presbyterian Church in Seoul, the largest conservative Presbyterian church in Korea. Lee has published numerous volumes of his expository sermons.

²⁹ Achtemeier, Creative Preaching, 63.

³⁰ Buttrick, Interpretation and Preaching, 55.

In a sermon titled "Laborers in the Vineyard" (Matt. 20:1-16),³¹ Lee develops three points after supplying extensive biblical background and information.

Lee asks what moral lessons we can learn from this text.

1) God is not in debt to any human being. God is not obligated to pay back anything to us. We are not creditors in relation to God Our tithing and service to the church will not make God in debt to us Rather, we have to serve God with a humble mind, by confessing, "We are unworthy servants" (Luke 17:10) If we serve God in order to get something from God, it is like giving money to shaman for his blessings. Christian faith is not a shamanistic faith or "give and take" type of faith. "How can I express my thanks for your grace?" must be our attitude to serve God.

2) The text gives us another lesson: God is more concerned about life than material goods. Look at verses 6-7, where workers are idling in the market place. The landowner asked them, "Why do you stand here idle all day?" Their answer was "Because no one has hired us." Clearly they wanted work to support their family, but there was no job for them The householder paid the same wage to them, even though they worked only for an hour, as he did to those who worked all day long from the early dawn. The landowner was not concerned about the wages nor hours of work. He was more concerned about the need of the employees and their life. Today we are living in a material-centered society. We measure everything by money. For us Christians, the concern and love for our neighbors has to be our top priority

3) The text shows us the truth of 19:30 Matt. 19:30 and 20:16 in today's text tells us that those who believed first may lose their reward If we boast of our long history of faith as deacons, elders, and pastors we shall become the last. But even those new converts who trust in God for the forgiveness of their sins and the gift of salvation will be the first What is important is our thankfulness to God's grace for us and our commitment and dedication to the work of the Kingdom

Lee concludes his sermon by summarizing his three points.

³¹ Jong-Yoon Lee, Jesu uh Biyuh [The parables of Jesus] (Seoul: Emmaus, 1985), 105-20.

Recent studies in parables show us that parables have structured "plots" and literary movement. "They unfold episode by episode, producing in listening consciousness a traveling action."³² Therefore, in preparing his sermon, the preacher should seek to unfold the parable as a story rather than in a static and rationalistic way.³³ Often, parables invite us to meet them on our terms. At the outset, we find in them our own familiar self, world, and God. Then, suddenly, our world is disrupted by them and we are oriented to a new world. Sallie McFague describes the process:

A parable begins in the ordinary world with its conventional standards and expectations, but in the course of the story a radically different perspective is introduced that disorients the listener, and finally, through the interaction of the two competing viewpoints, tension is created that results in a redescription of life in the world.³⁴

"Reorientation by disorientation" happens because parables as metaphor seek to rupture our conventional world.³⁵

New Testament scholar John R. Donahue says, "Hardly any parable in the Gospels seems to upset the basic structure of any orderly society" as does the parable of the laborers in the vineyard.³⁶ However, in his sermon dealing with that parable, Lee does not allow his listeners to enter the world of the

³² David Buttrick, Preaching Jesus Christ (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 38.

³³ Richard L. Eslinger, "Preaching the Parables and the Main Idea," Perkins Journal 36 (Fall 1983): 30.

³⁴ Sallie McFague, Metaphorical Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 46-7.

³⁵ Paul Ricoeur, "Biblical Hermeneutics," Semeia 4 (1975): 114.

³⁶ John R. Donahue, The Gospel in Parable (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 81.

laborers and experience the same bitter feelings as those who worked all day. As a result, there is no disruption of our conventional world-view and our image of God basing his rewards on merit. Thus, the hearers do not get a new view of reality: the kingdom of God. In his sermon, Lee tries primarily to draw three moral lessons from the parable. For Lee and most Korean expository preachers, the literary forms of the text do not make much difference in how they prepare their sermons. Whether they preach on a parable or a Pauline epistle, or on a text in the Psalms, they will preach three points with many subpoints.

Recent biblical studies tell us that Jesus is not only telling or teaching us something in parable, but also doing something to us that could not be done without the parable. Therefore, Lee and other Korean expository preachers need to be more attentive to the literary quality of Scripture. They need to ask, "How does this passage preach?" before they ask, "What does this passage preach?"³⁷

David Buttrick gives us a new paradigm for preaching the parables.

In constructing a sermon, our task is not merely interpretation--"What does the parable mean?"--but intentionality, "How can we make the parable do?" Somehow we must design a sermon to do certain things in congregational consciousness.³⁸

The parable does not merely make us spectators and present a lesson. Rather, it invites us to become participants in a new experience. In this way, we are given the opportunity to be brought into a mysterious new world, the kingdom of God, and forced to rethink our lives before God. The Korean expository

³⁷ William H. Willimon, Preaching About Conflict in the Local Church (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 108-9.

³⁸ Buttrick, Homiletic, 349.

preacher should identify the literary forms of the text he or she is preaching. For, as the forms of the text vary, so should the manner by which it is handled.

Pitfalls of Moralizing

The old mode of expository sermon was considered irrelevant and dull by many because of its tendency to remain in biblical times. However, many evangelical proponents of expository preaching now emphasize application of the biblical message to contemporary life. Walter L. Liefeld says that "an expository preaching has application ... without application, it is only exposition, not expository preaching. It is information, not message."³⁹

However, in the process of applying the message to contemporary life, there is a pitfall--the danger of creating a moralizing sermon. The moralizing sermon is a markedly unbiblical tool with which to preach the Bible and expository preaching is the most susceptible to it. In the expository sermon, the preacher starts with exegesis of his text, then formulates the message of the text, and subsequently tries to apply the message to his own congregation. In correlating the biblical message to a contemporary situation, the preacher will usually find some type of moral parallel. Moralizing sermons emphasize that things should be done, that virtues must be developed, or that faith must be strengthened. The gospel is presented as having suggestions for better living, principles for right behavior, or obligations to be met.

There is no doubt that the Bible emphasizes the importance of moral action. Christianity is an intensely moral religion. The demand for righteous-

³⁹ Walter L. Liefeld, New Testament Exposition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 6.

ness and the call to faithful discipleship pervade both the Old and New Testaments. Preachers must confront the congregation with the ethical and moral implications of their faith. However, this is to be done in a way that corresponds to the Bible's own way of understanding moral obligation.⁴⁰

Scripture is focused primarily upon God and only secondarily upon us. Thus, we are to theologize first in our reading of a biblical text and to moralize only after having theologized. "Ask first what the account indicates God was doing; then ask what the theocentric reading indicates we can do in and with our lives in the light of it."⁴¹

The anthropocentric reading of the biblical text concentrates entirely on the words and actions of the people in the text, who become either positive or negative models for morality. The congregation is called upon to act like the biblical models or, when their actions are sinful, not to act like them. Joseph, for instance, becomes the great example of faith, honesty, and moral integrity for contemporary men and women. The moralizing preacher disregards "the fact that the author of the book of Genesis puts the story of Joseph within the framework of the history of salvation and that every part of this story must be preached within this very framework."⁴²

The hermeneutical key to Joseph's story is found in Joseph's words to his brothers: "As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today" (Gen. 50:20). (Passages cited by the authors are from the RSV).

⁴⁰ Keck, 102.

⁴¹ James A. Sanders, Canon and Community (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 72.

⁴² Runia, 68.

James A. Sanders further explicates the necessity of a theocentric and theological reading of the Bible.

One must read the Bible theologically before reading it morally. The primary meaning of redemption is that God has caught up human sinfulness into his plans and makes it part of those plans. This theologem pervades the Bible, OT and NT, and so all texts must be understood theologically (in the light of that theologem) before any indication for obedience can be drawn from it.⁴³

Preachers who moralize the text tend to transform the theocentric focus of the Bible into anthropocentric sermons and transfer "the description of the past people into prescription for people today."⁴⁴

Pang Kwan-Duck, who is a pastor of Songhak Dae Church in Seoul and teaches homiletics at the Asian Graduate Theological School, provides good examples of moralizing sermons. He has published expository sermons on Matthew, John, Acts, Romans, Revelation and other books. He preaches expository sermons consecutively from a book in the Bible. In his sermon entitled "A Centurion's Faith" (Matt. 8:5-13), his first point is that the centurion of Capernaum was a good man.

Jesus was moved by the centurion's love for his invalid servant. Thus Jesus told him, "I will come and heal him," even before the centurion asked him. Love and compassion moves man's mind. Accordingly, if we give our charity and love to the least among us, God will be moved and compensate us with reward In this materialistic, spiritless society, let us give our flowing love and compassion to others like the centurion of Capernaum.

In his second point, Pang encourages his congregation to have the same kind of faith as the centurion had, so that Jesus will recognize them.

In his third point, Pang talks about the salvation of the Gentiles.

⁴³ Sanders, "Hermeneutics," 406.

⁴⁴ Greidanus, 165.

The Gentiles who have good faith will participate in the Kingdom with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but even Israelites who have not faith shall be cast into outer darkness and will not receive salvation We believe in Jesus not to go to such a terrible place like hell. The opposite place of hell is heaven where there is no suffering, where there is joy, life, praise, love, glory, light, rest and everlasting blessedness. Therefore, let us believe in Jesus to go to heaven.

How happy are those who are heaven bound? To share this joy with others, we preach, "Believe in Jesus to go to Heaven." But many refuse to accept the good news. To refuse it means to go to hell There are many foolish people. Let us fervently believe like the centurion and live with such a faith that is worthy of the praise of Jesus and participate in heaven with our forefathers of faith.

Pang continues his moralizing exhortation in his third point.

To believe in Jesus well, we have to observe the Lord's Day. Worship hour should not be missed. Observing the Lord's Day is like climbing the ladder toward heaven. The ladder is Jesus. We should hold Jesus and climb the ladder. If we miss one Sunday's worship hour, then one of the rungs in the ladder will be lost. Missing two worship hours means losing two rungs of the ladder. The more you miss worship hours, the more rungs will be lost. Finally, the gap is too wide, you cannot climb to heaven. Therefore, don't miss coming to church every Sunday to worship in order to enter heaven without difficulty. Don't lose the rung of the ladder.⁴⁵

Pang emphasizes the role of faith in receiving God's blessing and grace. "If you have more faith, you will have more of God's grace. If you have little faith, you will have less grace." Pang concludes his sermon, "Let us have the centurion's faith and receive the abundant grace and blessing from God."

The intention of the text is to tell its readers that the gift of healing and salvation is not granted on the basis of man's status, worth or merit (cf. Luke

⁴⁵ Kwan-Duck Pang, Chu Hae Sulkyo Mattheo Bokum [Expository sermons on Matthew], vol. 1 (Seoul: Korean Christian Education Research Center, 1984), 346-353.

7:4-5), but is given on the ground of faith in Christ. And faith, according to this story, is not confidence in our merits or status, but rather reliance on Christ and the authority of His Word.

Pang's moralistic sermon misunderstands the Bible's own understanding of moral obligation. As he reverses the proper order of law and gospel, so he reverses the indicative and the imperative. By nature, the gospel first of all is indicative. It is an announcement of God's love for the world. The gospel is good news first. Moral instruction follows. Preachers who always prefer to use the imperative mood in their preaching do not understand that "moral motivation arising out of life in Christ comes from eucharista (thanksgiving) and doxa (praise) for what God is doing in us and in our world."⁴⁶

To have a proper relationship between law and gospel is especially important to Korean preaching. Because of Confucian cultural influence, the imperative mood has always dominated Korean preaching.⁴⁷ Moralizing preachers do not trust their congregations' capacity to appropriate the biblical message to their lives. Preaching in which the indicative and imperative are in a healthy relationship can awaken moral motivation in the congregation. The preacher who steps into the pulpit on Sunday morning bears the greatest gift the congregation will ever receive. In his preaching, the preacher is to unwrap the gift of grace and ask, "Now, what are we going to do with it?"⁴⁸

⁴⁶ William H. Willimon, The Service of God (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), 143.

⁴⁷ Chang-Bok Chung, "Sulkyo wa Jidoryuk," [Preaching and leadership], Christian Thought 32 (July 1988): 219.

⁴⁸ Ronald J. Allen, Preaching for Growth (St. Louis: CBP Press, 1988), 29.

Pitfalls of Allegorization or Spiritualization

Another pitfall of the expository sermon is allegorization or spiritualization. Since the expository preacher usually preaches consecutively from the Bible, he will preach from every portion of Scripture. Since some sections of the Scripture are difficult to preach, however, there is nothing for him to do but to allegorize or spiritualize in order to derive some meaning.⁴⁹

Since allegorization or spiritualization can easily transport the biblical text to a different situation with immediate and clear results, it has been frequently used by expository preachers.

Sometimes a preacher who is known to be an inerrantist is guilty of spiritualizing an Old Testament text in order to provide sermon material. Such spiritualizing or allegorization is an unwarranted practice among some preachers, given their theological convictions about biblical authority. We often accuse the liberal of not being faithful to the text of Scripture and then we hermeneutically violate that same text of Scripture through allegorizing.⁵⁰

Allegorization is a kind of interpretation that arbitrarily makes one thing in the text stand for something else. The method of allegorization in interpreting literature was widespread in the ancient world. In the New Testament, a good example is Paul's use of the Sarah and Hagar story to argue his point about slavery and freedom (Gal. 4:22-31). Paul calls the story an allegory. In the Gospels, parables and miracle stories received allegorical interpretations. In the parable of the sower (Mark 4:3-9), an allegorical interpretation follows the parable (verses 14-20). And some of the parables

⁴⁹ Ernest Best, From Text to Sermon (Atlanta: John Knox, 1978), 60.

⁵⁰ David Allen and Jerry Vines, "Biblical Authority and Homiletics," Authority and Interpretation, ed. Duane A. Garrett (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 172.

show evidence of allegorical interpretations for new historical contexts (Matt. 22:2-14; Mark 12:1-12).⁵¹

The early Christians, especially Origen, took over allegorical methods from their contemporaries. There are accounts of events in Scripture that, if taken literally, sound absurd, and even the Gospels contain passages that seemingly contradict one another. Why, then, if the Bible is the inspired Word of God, do these apparent discrepancies exist? Origen assumed that we ought to look for a spiritual or allegorical meaning when one finds contradictions in Scripture.⁵²

Sanders says that amazingly little allegory is used by biblical writers. And this biblical precedent gives us a clue that the use of allegory today is suspect and violates the inherent constraints within canonical texts.⁵³ Therefore, we should refrain from the practice of allegorical interpretation. Allegorization can make the text mean anything one wants, disregarding the plain meaning of Scripture on which the Reformers insisted. It does not recognize the real meaning of Scripture.

Scripture should be interpreted in the light of its theological, historical, cultural and sociological context. But allegorization by its very nature pays no heed to the context.⁵⁴ Another danger of the allegorical method is that redemptive history is dissolved into timeless myth.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Craddock, Preaching, 139.

⁵² Best, 58.

⁵³ Sanders, Canon and Community, 62.

⁵⁴ Best, 61.

⁵⁵ Duncan S. Ferguson, Biblical Hermeneutics (Atlanta: John Knox, 1986), 145.

But the problems inherent in this method are apparent. The erosion of the fundamental tenet of biblical revelation--that God acts and speaks through concrete events, historical persons, and human relationships--is totally unacceptable, and the extent to which allegorizing does just that renders it an unacceptable interpretive method. This is especially so when all allegorical flights into the blue skies of "higher" or "more spiritual" meanings threaten the central affirmation of the incarnation and its implications for the Christian life as life in the world.⁵⁶

Associated with allegorical interpretation is "spiritualization," which is a method of drawing a spiritual lesson while ignoring the actual meaning of the passage. Spiritual interpretation is an outgrowth of the allegorizing method.⁵⁷

Spiritualizing a text is not always wrong. It has a basis in the New Testament itself. Mark and John, for instance, both use stories about the healing of the blind to make a point about spiritual blindness (Mark 10; John 9). Paul also spiritualized the Old Testament occasionally, as in 1 Cor. 10:1-5.

Preachers who spiritualize the text are often regarded by the congregation as more spiritual and authoritative than other preachers. Thus, many Korean preachers prefer to spiritualize the biblical texts. The greatest danger in the spiritualizing method is that a particular incident may be isolated from its original situation into a timeless truth. Hee-Chun Park, a homiletician and pastor in Seoul, thinks allegorical and spiritual interpretation is poisoning Korean pulpits today. He assails those preachers who disregard the literal meaning of the text and allegorize or spiritualize the text from the beginning of their interpretation.⁵⁸ Keun-Won Park, a Presbyterian

⁵⁶ Craddock, Preaching, 140.

⁵⁷ Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970), 41.

⁵⁸ Hee-Chun Park, "Hankuk Kangdan ehsuh Kangjo Doeuhjahal Neyong," [The contents that should be emphasized in the Korean pulpits], Pastoral Monthly 5 (Feb. 1981): 34-5.

homiletician, also observes that many Korean preachers camouflage their ignorance and lack of biblical theology by spiritualizing the text.⁵⁹

Park Jong-Soon is one of the leading expository preachers in Korea. He has published many volumes of his sermons and edited two volumes of Search-light on Korean Preaching. His sermon entitled "Becoming Like Cows" is based on 1 Sam. 6:10-15. It is a story about the ark, which was captured by the Philistines and later returned to Israel. Throughout the narrative, the sovereign freedom of God is expressed. When the Israelites brought the ark into their camp, they expected the Philistines to be defeated (1 Sam. 4). Surprisingly, however, Israel was defeated, and the captured ark was brought to the Philistines' Dagon temple. But the ark, which is the symbol of Yahweh's presence, was enough first to topple, then to break the very idol of Dagon itself and to bring plagues to the Philistines (Chapter 5). Israel was weak, but her God was all-powerful.⁶⁰

In the text of the sermon, the ark came back to the Israelites without the slightest effort by the men of Israel to retrieve it. The Israelites were overjoyed to see the ark returned, but the lesson was clear: the ark should not be taken for granted. The story tells of God's freedom and grace.⁶¹

However, in Park's sermon, the milch cows that pulled the ark on the cart are protagonists.⁶² In the introduction, he says "We can find profound

⁵⁹ Keun-Won Park, "Ohnuleui Mokhoejawa Shinhak Hyungsong," [Today's pastor and theological formation], Christian Thought 29 (Sept. 1985): 32.

⁶⁰ David F. Payne, I & II Samuel (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 31.

⁶¹ Ralph W. Klein, I Samuel (Waco: Word, 1983), 60-1.

⁶² Jong-Soon Park, Byulul Bonun Salamdul [People who look at the star] (Seoul: Hae Sun Publ., 1986), 12-9.

lessons from the cows who carried on their heavy responsibilities" without a word of complaint. "The cows didn't want to do it" is Park's first point.

For the cows, grazing on grass in the meadow and cultivating the field and giving suck to their calves were their only hope and joy. But the cows were selected to pull the cart against their wish and were forced to be separated from their calves. They had to go to the unknown Beth-shemesh and had to die there. Verse 12 says cows were lowing as they went. Animals, too, have compassion. We are living in a dehumanized society where there is no compassion and love. But the cows had sympathy for their calves left behind. There are many things which we don't like to do ... but even though we don't like to do it, we have to do it because the Lord has given me that task

"The cows went straight down the road" is Park's second point.

.... The cows could follow their urge and turn back to their young crying calves left behind. They could turn over their carts in protest. But the cows went straight down the road to Beth-shemesh. Monkeys are cunning, but cows are steady and that is their virtue

Moses gave instructions to his successor Joshua before his death. "Be strong and courageous ... do not turn from it to the right or to the left." Likewise in our faith journey, we have to go straight to our goal. Hebrews 12:2 says: "Looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" ... and Phil. 3:14: "I press on toward the goal for the prize" The cows could have turned to the right or to the left because of their love for their calves They could have taken the wrong path because the road was unknown, but they went straight down the road to Beth-shemesh.

"The cows became a "burnt-offering" is the third point in Park's sermon.

.... When the cows came to Beth-shemesh after ten miles of walking, the Israelites offered the "burnt-offering" by killing the cows and using the wood of the cart for fuel. The cows gave everything. They gave their life, joy, will, blood, flesh, skin and everything The cows went straight down the road to Beth-shemesh in spite of difficult conditions and without a guide. They finished the race and became burnt-offerings. Like the cows, let us live our life, without a word, without fame and light, only by looking up to Jesus.

The text is on God's sovereign freedom and His grace, but for Park the milch cows are the center of the narrative. Biblical preaching is theocentric, but in Park's sermon the milch cows are the heroes of the story that we should imitate. Park tries to distill the spiritual meaning from this narrative by focusing on the Philistine milch cows, and moralizes the story by exhorting his congregation to learn spiritual lessons from the life of the cows; thus, he misses what the narrative is saying about God's freedom and grace.

As had been discussed earlier, the spiritualizing method disregards the historical context of the text and attempts to turn it into a timeless truth. For example, Acts 2:42-47 is an account of the early church's material sharing of Christian love. We tend to spiritualize the text, however, by saying "What really mattered was their spiritual sharing, and that is what the church today must do."⁶³ Liberation and minjung theologians, on the other hand, challenge our tendency to spiritualize the text. The preacher needs to use "spiritual" interpretation with care and with a proper understanding of its limitation.

Contextual Interpretation

Many evangelical homileticians insist that application is essential for expository preaching. But application should not violate the original intention, meaning, function or context of the text. In order to prevent spiritualization, allegorization, or moralizing in application, the preacher should contextually interpret both the text and the congregation.

The Holy Scriptures, especially the writings of the New Testament, are deeply pastoral and intentional. They are not a series of timeless theological

⁶³ Neil Richardson, Preaching from Scripture (London: Epworth, 1983), 26-7.

statements of faith or timeless principles of conduct that have to be applied to our own situations. They are written out of a deep pastoral concern for specific communities of believers and they speak to their specific needs. Leander Keck states that the Bible is a collection of literature that is occasioned by particular situations in the life of the communities of faith.⁶⁴

For example, Paul would never have written to Philippians what he wrote to Galatians, or vice versa. Since the biblical texts are contextual writings, they are already an application of the gospel. Therefore, our interpretive task is rather "to let them be heard afresh and to let them resonate with our own experience."⁶⁵ According to Nigel Watson, preaching that "accords most closely with the intention of the biblical authors will be that which addresses itself to a situation or need comparable to that which they themselves were addressing."⁶⁶

The writers of the New Testament, in addressing specific communities, specific circles of readers, sought to speak to their needs. The message matches the audience and acquires a sharper point It is a word that strikes home for them in their situation If I can identify in myself or among my hearers a condition comparable to that addressed by the original author, I can surely restate the message he was seeking to convey to his audience in such a way that it becomes a word that strikes home for mine.⁶⁷

Korean expository preachers use advisory and constitutive hermeneutics mainly to nurture, educate and support their congregations for personal spirituality and evangelism. They rarely use the prophetic hermeneutics for

⁶⁴ Keck, 82.

⁶⁵ Nigel Watson, Striking Home (London: Epworth, 1987), 130.

⁶⁶ Watson, 130.

⁶⁷ Watson, 133.

nurturing the social consciousness of Christians. Dr. Kyung-Jik Han, a respected and influential elderly preacher, says of Christian social responsibility:

Church is church and state is state. They are two completely different entities. Church and politics should be separated. And the responsibility of the church is to produce a good man who will engage in politics conscientiously. The church should not be involved in political matters Rather the church should concentrate solely on spiritual matters.⁶⁸

Han's remarks are typical of many Korean expository preachers. However, Han's attempt to avoid politics is itself a political action.⁶⁹ By shunning political responsibility, he implicitly supports the present oppressive system and denies that "God has acted in Jesus Christ to reclaim all human life, including the political, social and economic."⁷⁰ What the Korean expository preachers need to use more frequently is the prophetic hermeneutic--to offer "an alternative perception of reality [that lets] people see their own history in the light of God's freedom and His will for justice."⁷¹

Expository preaching is now so strongly, widely and enthusiastically accepted by Korean preachers and churches that one cannot speak of Korean contemporary preaching without studying it. In the midst of such great popularity, many think that if the sermon is not expository, it is not biblical. And

⁶⁸ Man Jo, "Joongdorul Kunun Mokhoe" [Ministry in the middle of the road], Christian Thought 29 (July 1984): 97.

⁶⁹ Paul Scott Wilson, Imagination of the Heart (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 196.

⁷⁰ John H. Westerhoff, as quoted in Wilson, 196.

⁷¹ Walter Brueggemann, The Prophetic Imagination (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 110.

some preachers believe that the very act of preaching an expository type of sermon guarantees that it will be authoritative and biblical.

However, the expository method cannot guarantee that a sermon is truly biblical. An expository sermon can be full of texts but empty of gospel. It can hammer the people with the moralism of the law, and abuse the gospel by allegorization or spiritualization. In fact, Korean expository sermons reveal abundant biblical background information. Many preachers talk about a Bible text at length, discuss its historical background and even the original meaning accurately, and yet preach an unbiblical expository sermon. The preacher should not assume that biblical exposition is happening because there is much talk about the text, because a "biblical sermon is not a book report. It is a proclamation of what has been heard in and through the text."⁷²

Once again, Korean expository preachers must be attentive to the literary form of the text and its context. At the same time, exegeting the context of the congregation is every bit as important as exegeting the text itself. If the Korean expository sermon draws "attention to the light that is in the Word of God, while at the same time calling attention to the human situation and promise of hope because of that light,"⁷³ then it will greatly serve Korean Christians by meeting their spiritual needs.

⁷² Keck, 55.

⁷³ Massey, 23.

CHAPTER 5

Life Situation Preaching: Preaching the Threefold Blessing

Introduction

Paul Yonggi Cho of the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul is pastor of the world's largest church. The Assemblies of God minister began in 1958 with a handful of worshipers meeting in a tent. The congregation now numbers more than 600,000. Cho also operates an international television ministry, and his programs are seen in 40 countries.¹ Cho asks, "Why do so many people want to come to a church that is already crowded? Why do they stand in line for over one hour before each one of our seven services just to get a seat?" According to Cho, "The answer is that our Christians are hungry for the Word of God."² Does Cho's preaching truly fulfill his congregation's hunger and need for the Word of God? There are many difficult questions to be answered concerning his preaching and theology.

Cho's preaching can be categorized as "life-situation preaching." In a provocative article in Harper's magazine in July 1928, entitled "What is the Matter with Preaching?," Harry Emerson Fosdick challenged the irrelevant and uninteresting expository sermons of his time. He offered another option--life-situation preaching, which begins with a problem or need. "Any sermon which ... tackles a real problem, throws even a little light on it, and helps some

¹ Joan Connell, "Korean's Prosperity Ministry Wins Multitudes of Converts," Dallas Morning News, 24 Sept. 1988: 42A.

² Paul Yonggi Cho, The Leap of Faith (South Plainfield, N.J.: Bridge, 1984), 4.

individuals practically to find their way through it cannot be altogether uninteresting."³ Fosdick claimed that the place to begin a sermon was with the real problems of the people.

Fosdick made a great contribution to the preaching world by helping to rescue it from the dullness and irrelevancy of the prevailing fundamentalist's approach to a sermon. The major weakness in the life-situation type of preaching, however, is the fact that the controlling element in the interpretative process is the contemporary problem as defined solely by the preacher. Only after this move is made does the preacher turn to Scripture. But then, of course, Scripture is simply used to support what the preacher has already assumed to be true.⁴

In line with life-situation preaching, Cho's basic approach is "to find a need and feed it."⁵

The preacher is like a gourmet cook There are many hungry people in the world. If the preacher prepared delicious meals on the table, people will naturally be attracted to come to it. Thus how we prepare our gourmet meals to satisfy the appetite of the people will determine our success in ministry.⁶

The Christian message, Cho argues, must be life-situation oriented. Therefore, messages to farmers, merchants and intellectuals should be different in

³ Harry Emerson Fosdick, "What is the Matter with Preaching?," Harper's, July 1928: 134.

⁴ F. Willford Hobbie, "Next to the Last Link: The Preacher in the Process of Interpretation," The Hermeneutical Quest, ed. Donald G. Miller (Allison Park, N.J.: Pickwick, 1986), 124.

⁵ Paul Yonggi Cho, "Sungryung kwa Mokhoe," [Holy Spirit and ministry], Kyohoe Sungjang [Church Growth], vol. 3 (Seoul: Yung San, 1983), 30.

⁶ Paul Yonggi Cho, Mokhoe Saeng Hwal Dansang [Reflections on pastoral life], vol. 1 (Seoul: Yung San, 1978), 28.

emphasis, although the core of the message is the same. The preacher can sell his message of the Kingdom with great effectiveness if he takes into consideration the contexts and situations of the hearers.⁷

Cho's life-situation preaching comes from his early ministerial experience. When he started his ministry in one of the worst slum areas in Seoul, in the late 1950s, the people to whom he ministered were living in such desperately poor conditions that they could hardly find food to eat. When he preached to them about the Kingdom of Heaven, his message seemed irrelevant. Thus, he searched for a message that could give hope and new life to the people who were in such despair. Cho claims that, after many days of prayer and supplication, he received an answer from God that contained the truth of the threefold blessings of salvation, health and prosperity, written in 3 John 2: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy should prospereth."

This message of the threefold blessings of salvation, health and prosperity has become the foundation of all Cho's sermons and the hermeneutical key for interpreting Scripture.

When we understand the threefold blessings fully, we can interpret Scripture from Genesis to Revelation on the basis of the passage that speaks of these truths Like blind men touching an elephant to comprehend its shape, those of us who read the Bible without this foundation cannot understand or interpret fully what we read. But when we read the Bible armed with this strong theological foundation, all Scripture is connected and the work of the living God is manifested clearly.⁸

⁷ Cho, Mokhoe Saeng Hwal Dansang [Reflections on pastoral life], 17-18.

⁸ Paul Yonggi Cho, Salvation, Health and Prosperity (Altamonte Springs, Fla.: Creation House, 1987), 12.

When the words of 3 John 2 first struck Cho, Korea was still struggling to recover from the devastating Korean War. People were hungry, and many had lost hope. It is understandable that Cho's affirmative message of the threefold blessings captivated the poverty-stricken Korean Christians.⁹

The more typical Korean Christian message has been, "Believe in Jesus and go to Heaven."¹⁰ Historically, Korean Christians have believed that they would face many trials as well as much suffering, poverty and sickness in this life, but be richly blessed and rewarded in heaven. Yet Cho's message was quite different. Although Cho sometimes proclaimed, "Believe in Jesus and go to Heaven," his emphasis lay elsewhere. Cho added a new emphasis, namely, that one can be rich, healthy and prosperous by believing in Jesus here and now in this life.¹¹ Initially, Cho's message drew people from among the uneducated, the sick, the poor and the dislocated. But his message gradually began to attract more and more people from the middle and upper-middle

⁹ Scholars agree that the basic Korean religious consciousness is shamanistic. Throughout Korean history, one can see the evidence of shamanism in other religions (Buddhism, Taoism, and Neo-Confucianism), for shamanism is the basic ethos of the Korean people. Shamanism has also influenced Korean Protestant Christianity. Influences that can be traced to shamanism include practices relating to prayer--all-night prayer meetings on Friday evenings, daily 4:30 a.m. or 5 a.m. morning prayer meetings, and the common practice of spending certain periods of time in prayer and fasting in the prayer mountain houses. Cho has been called "a Christian shaman" by his critics in view of his predominant emphasis upon healing, material blessings, speaking in tongues, and prayer. However, Cho's message is not a new quasi-Christian religion, for his theological position generally is within the boundaries of charismatic Protestant Christianity. See Daniel J. Adams' article, "The Roots of Korean Theology," *Taiwan Journal of Theology* 7 (March 1985): 193-207.

¹⁰ Keun-Won Park, "Reformed Witness in Korea: A Historical Reflection," *Reformed World* 39 (Dec. 1986): 613.

¹¹ Since Cho is using KJV for his Biblical citation, KJV will be used in this chapter.

classes who aspired to be both successful and prosperous. Cho discerned the needs of the times, just when Korea's so-called economic miracle was getting under way, and succeeded by stressing the threefold blessings of God.

The Blessing of Salvation

In Cho's view, the first blessing every Christian must enjoy is the prosperity of the soul ("... even thy soul prospereth." 3 John 2). According to Cho, our God is a good God who desires that our souls prosper. This is the blessing of salvation, and salvation can be granted only to those who accept Jesus Christ as Savior. He who does not accept Jesus has no hope and is the servant of the devil. But he who has received salvation through faith in Jesus Christ has prosperity of the soul and reigns with Christ in a new life.

Therefore, Christians are no longer ordinary people, but citizens of heaven who possess eternal life and power that Christ shares with them. They are kings.

If we are kings, shouldn't we have majesty, honor, and material things befitting kings? This is our natural inheritance. It is a legacy which we can claim by showing the proper credentials. These are our treasures which we can claim as easily as we would draw money from a bank in which a generous amount of money had been deposited in our name with our account number on it. If one professes to be a king, but is impoverished and helplessly sick in bed, how can people believe he is a king? ¹²

Cho firmly believes that, since we are God's children and kings, we should enjoy the blessings of wealth and health as well as the blessing of salvation.

¹² Cho, Salvation, Health and Prosperity, 51.

The Blessing of Wealth

The second blessing that, in Cho's view, every Christian should enjoy is the blessing of wealth ("Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper ..." 3 John 2). Cho strongly believes that, if our souls prosper, it is only natural that material prosperity will follow. This is the order and the law of creation. Thus, we may lay aside the traditional thinking that spiritual blessings and heaven are all we need, and that material blessings are out of place for us. We should correct the theory that poverty, pain, trials and tribulations are necessary to Christian virtue. Nowhere in the Bible is it written that meager meals and poor living conditions are pleasing to God. Rather, throughout the Old and New Testaments, God speaks about "blessings."

In the New Testament, the salvation that Jesus wrought for us has the same power in the material world as in the spiritual world. Jesus shed His precious blood and made out a deed--a certificate of title--calling for our prosperity in all things. Here, Cho bases his prosperity gospel on the doctrine of substitutionary atonement. If Jesus took upon himself our sins on the cross, then he also took upon himself the curse of poverty. Just as spiritual salvation is effective through the shed blood on the cross, so material salvation, which is the prosperity of wealth, is likewise effective. Cho cites Gal. 3:13-14 to support his argument.¹³

Cho says Jesus' atonement made Abraham's blessing available to all people. The blessings God gave to Abraham in Genesis 17 included children, material wealth, long life and the privilege of becoming the source of blessings to others. Why did Jesus redeem us at such a terrible cost, wearing the crown

¹³ Cho, Salvation, Health and Prosperity, 53-69.

of thorns, enduring the agony of being nailed to the cross and being pierced with a spear? To Cho, the purpose of Jesus' atonement on the cross is "that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." (Gal. 3:14) ¹⁴

Cho connects Gal. 3 with Deut. 28, in which Moses promises blessings to the Israelites if they obey the law and threatens curses if they fail to obey. Among the many curses listed are poverty and sickness. Since the curses are related to the law in Deut. 28, Cho argues that, when "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law" (Gal. 3:13), he redeemed us from both poverty and sickness.

However, Paul's discourse in Gal. 3 has nothing to do with Deut. 28. A look at the context of Gal. 3 suggests that Paul is not concerned with the issues of health and wealth, but with his major theological theme, "Law versus Grace." ¹⁵ The blessing of Abraham with which Paul is concerned is the promise that Gentiles, along with Jews, would one day be included among God's people. Here, Paul "simply identifies the blessing, with God's 'grace' and his 'justification by faith.'" ¹⁶ Since the issues of health and wealth are not Paul's intention, it is unacceptable for Cho to say that these benefits are available to us on the basis of this passage.

Another important biblical passage for Cho's prosperity gospel is 2 Cor. 8:9. Cho asks:

¹⁴ Cho, Salvation, Health and Prosperity, 70-1.

¹⁵ Jim Kinnebrew, "The Gospel of Affluence," Mid-America Theological Journal 9 (Fall 1985): 57.

¹⁶ Hans Dieter Betz, Galatians: Hermenia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 142.

Why would the creator-God, who made everything by the word of His mouth, go around so poor on the earth that He would have no place to lay His head? Why did Jesus, who fed more than 5,000 people and had food left over, lead such a destitute life that He looked for fruit on a fig tree? He was often out all night, exposed to the dew of heaven. He often slept on the ground because He had no other place to sleep. Why did He do that? The Bible answers, "That ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9).¹⁷

However, if we do not receive "the blessing of wealth," which is offered to us through the cross of Jesus Christ, we make the poverty of Jesus meaningless. Thus, we have a responsibility to be prosperous. A life of prosperity is a birth-right for all Christians.

Cho argues that, if we live a life of poverty without some special reason, we are insulting Jesus. Paul endured severe testing and hardship because he was called to do a great work. But not everyone is required to undertake such a task. Thus, except for a few who are called to such a mission, God wants us to live in comfort with our needs met.¹⁸ Poverty in itself is never a thing a man can be proud of, for it makes the poverty of Jesus for us void.¹⁹ Therefore, a Christian's life that is always full of failure is not a life that is pleasing to God.

Cho's interpretation of 2 Cor. 8:9, however, is highly subjective. The context and intention of the verse are completely disregarded. It is obvious that Paul does not say in this passage that financial prosperity is provided for in the Atonement. The Corinthians were made rich through Christ's poverty, but the riches Paul spoke of were not material. He describes their abundance

¹⁷ Cho, Salvation, Health and Prosperity, 68.

¹⁸ Cho, Salvation, Health and Prosperity, 54.

¹⁹ Cho, Salvation, Health and Prosperity, 68.

in verse 7, "Ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us."²⁰

We have seen that, theologically, the most important biblical passage for Cho is 3 John 2: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy should prospereth." Even this key verse does not support Cho's prosperity gospel. The Greek word translated as "prosper" in the King James version means simply "to go well with someone." The Revised Standard version replaces the verb phrase "that thou mayest prosper" with "that all may go well with you." Also, the New English Bible reads, "My dear Gaius, I pray that you may enjoy good health, and that all may go well with you, as I know it goes well with your soul." This verse records the normal polite salutation. John wished Gaius well and said so. He did not mean to say he hoped Gaius would always have the prosperity of both health and wealth. Professor Gordon Fee points out:

This combination of wishing for "things to go well" and for the recipient's "good health" was the standard form of greeting in a personal letter in antiquity. To extend John's wish for Gaius to refer to financial and material prosperity for all Christians of all times is totally foreign to the text. John neither intended that, nor could Gaius have so understood it. Thus it cannot be the "plain meaning" of the text.²¹

Cho uses the personal greeting of John to Gaius as the pronouncement of God to every Christian with the belief that every word in the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Thus, Cho says: "Why do you suppose our Lord said, 'As your soul prospereth'?" However, "the doctrine of inspiration does not justify

²⁰ Kinnebrew, 60.

²¹ Gordon D. Fee, "The Gospel of Prosperity--an Alien Gospel," Reformation Today, Nov./Dec. 1984: 40.

putting John's words to Gaius into the mouth of God and addressing them to every one."²²

Cho's prosperity gospel comes from a shortsighted view of the whole of Scripture. Such hermeneutical selectivity leads Cho to preach a view not taught elsewhere in the New Testament, and to ignore the central message of Scripture that opposes his teaching.²³

In the Old Testament, God reveals himself as the One who champions the poor and the oppressed, taking their part and identifying with them. In the New Testament, when God became incarnate, He did not come as a wealthy Roman imperialist or a comfortable Hellenistic intellectual. Jesus came not for the sake of the rich and mighty, but for the sake of the lowly and hungry. He promised the kingdom of God to the poor (Luke 6:20), and repeatedly warned against the corrupting influence of money and power. He identified with the "marginal people" of the society and was finally killed by political and religious leaders who had power and influence.²⁴ God in the Scripture is a partisan of the powerless, the sinner, the poor and oppressed. As Karl Barth writes:

God always takes His stand unconditionally and passionately on this side alone: against the lofty and on behalf of the lowly; against those who already enjoy right and privilege and on behalf of those who are denied it and deprived of it.²⁵

²² Kinnebrew, 62.

²³ Fee, 41.

²⁴ Shirley C. Guthrie, Jr., Diversity in Faith and Unity in Christ (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 99.

²⁵ Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, vol. 2/1, trans. G. W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1957), 386.

After the coming of the Spirit, the early church community shared their possessions. They were free from the need of hoarding for any selfish purpose. There was sharing and sufficiency, and no one was in need. Paul was a free man in Christ, who knew contentment whatever the circumstances. In 1 Tim., Paul summons Christian believers to be both generous and contented. He urges those who have nothing to be content with food and clothing (6:6-10) and tells the rich to be "generous and willing to share," for this is true wealth (6:17-19).²⁶

Cho's message of prosperity is an alien gospel. Korean Christians do not need the alien gospel of prosperity, for their true need is the biblical message that will enable them to withstand secular materialism and empower them to live a simpler way of life in the Spirit.²⁷ Even though Cho says it is for God's glory and for mission and evangelism that we should prosper, his message is designed to appeal to Korean nationals who have dreamed of achieving economic success and overcoming perennial poverty.²⁸ Cho's gospel of prosperity basically appeals to our selfishness and our sense of material security. Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die In fact every command of Jesus is a call to die, with all our affections and lusts."²⁹ Korean Christians need to hear the major themes of the Bible: the story of God's gracious saving action, of His pursuit of justice, reconciliation

²⁶ Gordon D. Fee, "The New Testament View of Wealth and Possessions," New Oxford Review, May 1981: 11.

²⁷ For more information, see Ronald J. Sider, Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity, 1984).

²⁸ Cho, Salvation, Health and Prosperity, 53.

²⁹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship (New York: Macmillan, 1959), 99.

and peace on our behalf, and His call for our service to others. Christians are not called to worldly success and wealth, but to a life of love and service to others.

God's call to us is for a return to biblical faith and to a radical obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ. This does not require poverty, but it does require righteousness which in this context means to use our wealth not to manipulate others, but to alleviate the hurt and pain of the oppressed.³⁰

The Blessing of Health

In Cho's view, the third blessing every Christian should have is the blessing of health ("Beloved, I wish above all things that thou ... be in health ..." 3 John 2). According to Cho, our good God desires that we live in good health. In both the Old and New Testaments, God's will for man is not to cause sickness but to provide healing. His name is Jehovah-ropheka: "I am the Lord that healeth thee" (Exod. 15:26).³¹ Sickness was brought about as one of the curses and penalties allowed to befall man when he rebelled against God and did not keep His laws.

The invisible root of sickness and disease is sin: "The wages of sin is death ..." (Rom. 6:23). Through sin, "the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14) causes sickness, draining life by endless pain and suffering. The devil continually tries "to steal, and to kill and to destroy" (John 10:10) human beings by making use of his instrument, sin.³² Cho asserts that the devil is

³⁰ Fee, "The New Testament View of Wealth," 11.

³¹ Paul Yonggi Cho, Suffering ... Why Me? (South Plainfield, N.J.: Bridge, 1986), 91-102.

³² Cho, Suffering ... Why Me?, 12-6.

the one behind sickness, the one who provides its destructive energy. If the devil is cast out by the authority of Jesus Christ, the germ will decompose and disappear. There will be no one to feed the sickness or cause it to spread. Behind all the different kinds of disease, the devil is always there providing the energy for the disease.

The devil and his myriads of demons bring all kinds of sickness and diseases. People may ask, "Aren't viruses the cause of disease?" I say again that Satan provides all elements, including viruses, with destructive energy.³³

In the New Testament, when Jesus drove out the spirit of the devil, the strength of the disease was broken. The body, bruised and wounded by sickness, received the provision of health from Jesus and was completely healed. Even now, if anyone desires to be totally healed, he must first confess his sins and believe in Jesus, who is the only One with the power to destroy sin and death. To be totally healed, confessing our sin, experiencing God's forgiveness and receiving the Holy Spirit are important steps.

If we confess our sins and renew our minds with the Word so that our minds are subject to God instead of Satan, the devil will no longer rule our thought life. Then sickness which he brought will lose its power and die. When the devil departs, the virus which is the cause of all sickness and disease will lose its power. He will not be there to feed it or keep it alive. And when the devil has departed, new tissues or life will begin to replace the diseased area because Jesus came to give life and that more abundantly.³⁴

Cho's argument that all diseases are the works of the devil is an oversimplification of the multidimensional nature of sickness. Robert H. Culpepper, by contrast, talks of four kinds of sickness: (1) sickness of spirit caused by

³³ Cho, Salvation, Health and Prosperity, 118.

³⁴ Cho, Salvation, Health and Prosperity, 147.

personal sin, (2) emotional sickness or anxiety related to emotional hurts or painful memories, (3) physical sickness caused by disease or accidents, and (4) demonic oppression caused by evil spirits. At times, all four types are entwined in one patient's health problems.³⁵

Since to Cho the devil is the cause of all diseases, he and his followers think that every patient is oppressed by demons. If victims of cancer and leukemia are thus harboring demons in their bodies, the demons must be cast out of the victims' bodies if they are to be healed. Often, such terminally ill patients suffer an additional burden of guilt about harboring demons because of their lack of faith.³⁶

Cho firmly believes that the blessing of health is included in the redemption of Jesus on the cross on the basis of Gal. 3:13: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." To support his thesis, Cho cites three additional passages from Scripture: Isa. 53:3-5; Matt. 8:17; and 1 Peter 2:24. Cho argues that, if we believe that Christ redeemed us from our sins, we should believe that He redeemed us from our sickness also:

If we cannot believe in both kinds of redemption, we must not believe in any kind of redemption, for Jesus carried away both our sins and our sickness.³⁷

Thus, if Christians believe their sins are forgiven, but do not want to be healed from sickness and pain, this itself becomes a grave sin contrary to the

³⁵ Robert H. Culpepper, Evaluating the Charismatic Movement (Valley Forge: Judson, 1977), 120.

³⁶ Moon-Ho Chung, Changjojerk Mokhoe Sayerkui Yulshe [Key for creative pastoral ministry] (Seoul: Jesus Literature Crusade, 1984), 260-63.

³⁷ Cho, Salvation, Health and Prosperity, 132.

will of God. God must feel hurt, Cho argues, when He sees that a vast number of Christians are still in agony, bound by sickness in their bodies, simply because they refuse to receive the blessings of health He has prepared for them on the cross.³⁸

Cho's notion of healing as something grounded in the atoning death of Christ is a typical approach in Pentecostalism and one that is very common throughout the worldwide charismatic movement. The key biblical passages Cho cites to support his argument make it clear that Cho has failed to do a careful exegesis, which must involve determining the original, intended meaning of a text in its context. Krister Stendahl has asserted that the task of the pulpit can be carried out only if we know what the text meant. It will not do to read our own way of thinking back into the text.³⁹ Not until we have let the text speak in its own language and terms are we prepared to translate it into our contemporary language.

To support his thesis that our healing is included in Jesus' redemption on the cross, Cho connects Gal. 3:14, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law," with Deut. 28:21-22, where disease is one of the curses of disobedience to the law. From these texts, Cho argues that sickness is a part of the "curse of the law" from which Christ redeemed us. However, there is not even the remotest possibility that Paul was referring to "the curses" of Deut. 28 when he spoke of the "curse of the law" in Gal. 3. In the context of the letter, Paul "certainly assumes that the Law becomes a curse for those who seek

³⁸ Cho, Salvation, Health and Prosperity, 144.

³⁹ Krister Stendahl, "Biblical Theology," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, vol. 1, ed. George A. Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 431.

justification before God 'by works of the Law.'⁴⁰ And redemption in Galatians involves one issue only: how can we have the right relationship with God through faith or by works of the Law?⁴¹ Careful exegesis of Gal. 3:14 does not show us that Christ redeemed us from the curses of sickness.

In the same way, Isaiah 53 does not explicitly say that bodily healing is included in Christ's atonement. The same is true for its New Testament citations. Matt. 8:17 says that Jesus "took our infirmities and bore our diseases." Matthew clearly saw Isa. 53:4 as referring to physical healing, but the context makes clear that Jesus bore our infirmities and diseases, not by dying on the cross, but in his compassionate ministry of healing, through which we bore them away. In citing Isa. 53:4, Matthew does not even refer to the cross. Matthew saw healing as a part of Jesus' ministry, not as a part of the atonement.⁴²

1 Peter 2:24 quotes Isa. 53:5: "By his wounds you have been healed." At first impression, this seems to teach that physical healing was granted through Christ's substitutionary atonement. But the important matter to be considered is the context. The first part of 1 Peter 2:24 says that Christ bore our sins, not our diseases, in His body on the cross so "that we might die to sin and live to righteousness." The following verse, 25, speaks of the wandering sheep returning to the shepherd. Peter obviously understood the words "By his wounds you have been healed" to mean you have been restored to health

⁴⁰ Betz, 149.

⁴¹ Gordon D. Fee, The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospels (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Word for Today, 1979), 14.

⁴² Ken L. Sarles, "A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel," Bibliotheca Sacra 43 (Oct./Dec. 1986): 339.

from the sickness of your sins, for you have returned to the Shepherd. Peter is using the word "healed" in a figurative sense, for it "denotes the restoration of divine fellowship through the forgiveness of sins, and all the saving benefits which accompany it."⁴³

Then what did Isaiah himself intend in 53:4-5? The context shows us that the emphasis of this chapter is not that the Suffering Servant was made a sickness bearer, but an offering for sin (Isa. 53:10). The context of the passage, which consistently refers to transgressions and iniquities, supports the interpretation that sin rather than illness is Isaiah's primary concern. Isaiah's reference to the healing of disease should be understood as metaphorical. Israel was diseased and grievously wounded for her sins (Isa. 1:6-7). Yet God would restore his people in Exile. There would come one who himself suffers vicariously. In the context of Isaiah, healing refers metaphorically to the healing of the wounds and disease of sin.⁴⁴ Biblical commentator J. Ridderbos also writes:

The illness of which they are healed quite generally includes all the anguish, misery, and suffering they underwent on account of their sins; and the "healing" is salvation from all this.⁴⁵

The New Testament does see the cross as the focal point of God's redemptive activity, but there are no biblical texts that explicitly tell us that physical healing is provided in the atonement. There is no evidence that the blessing of health in the atonement was a part of the "kerygma" of the early

⁴³ Albrecht Oepke, "Iáomai," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 3, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 214.

⁴⁴ Fee, The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospels, 16.

⁴⁵ J. Ridderbos, Isaiah (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 478.

church. Paul says: "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3). Paul did not teach and believe: "Christ died for our sickness in accordance with the scriptures."⁴⁶ However, since sickness is ultimately the result of the Fall, one may perhaps argue that healing was already realized in the atonement, but not yet completely.⁴⁷ "It would seem, therefore, that only in a circuitous way is it really possible to argue for bodily healing in the atonement."⁴⁸

Ultimately, God wills the healing of all spiritual, psychological and physical sickness. He is on the side of healing. And as a sign and seal of the eschatological consummation, God often sends healing today.⁴⁹ But God does not promise the availability of universal and immediate healing to everyone.

In Pauline theology, the decisive event of salvation--the death and resurrection of Christ--has already occurred and is effective, but salvation has not been manifested in all its aspects.⁵⁰ We are living "between the times"--between the time of the beginning of the End and the consummation of the End. We who are in Christ have been freed from the power of sin and death and can be confident of eternal salvation, but we still sin and are not yet experiencing the fullness of redemption.

⁴⁶ Colin Brown, That You May Believe (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 200.

⁴⁷ Culpepper, 125.

⁴⁸ Fee, The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospels, 14.

⁴⁹ Ken Blue, Authority to Heal (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity, 1987), 69.

⁵⁰ Werner Georg Kummel, The Theology of the New Testament (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), 149ff.

Therefore, Christians are not spared hardship, failure, sickness and death any more than anyone else. They testify to the love of God not by the way they are spared, but by the way they bear these common human experiences. Even in the midst of severe suffering, Christians are able to experience God's comforting and sustaining presence.⁵¹ In the present age, even some of God's choicest servants continue to be perfected through suffering, as was the Son of God Himself (Heb. 5:8-9). Paul's thorn in the flesh was not removed even though he prayed three times (2 Cor. 12:7-9). Timothy suffered from stomach disorders and Paul left Trophimus ill at Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20).

Cho, like many other charismatics throughout the world, assumes that the power that raised Jesus from the dead, and that will one day remove all sickness, suffering and death, should be available now. The resurrecting power is at work in the world today through the Spirit, but we live in a state of tension between the already and the not yet. Cho and other wealth and health evangelists repeat the Corinthian error. In his recent commentary, Gordon D. Fee writes on the Corinthian charismatics' theology:

Christ's resurrection marks the turning of the ages; the subsequent gift of the eschatological Spirit is certain evidence that the End has begun. But the fact that we still live in bodies subject to decay (1 Cor. 15:49-53), and that there is yet a future Parousia of the Lord (1 Cor. 11:26; 15:23) with a subsequent resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20-28) is also clear evidence that what has begun has not yet been fully brought to consummation. Thus for Paul, believers are thoroughly eschatological people, determined and conditioned by the reality of the future that has already begun, but still awaiting the final glory. We are therefore both "already" and "not yet."⁵²

⁵¹ Guthrie, 93.

⁵² Gordon D. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 16.

If some Corinthian Christians thought of themselves as already transmitted into glory and triumph, Cho is committing the same mistake by forgetting that we are living "between the times."

Cho rightly observes, however, that two-thirds of Jesus' ministry was spent in healing. And Cho places a high priority on healing in his own ministry. His emphasis on healing, in fact, should remind the mainline churches that they have neglected the healing ministry. Modern psychosomatic medicine has made us aware that there are many disorders that have their roots in spiritual problems. In Korea, a large number of mainline Christians attend Cho's healing service because their churches do not provide it.

Early Christians called upon the elders of the church to pray for the sick (James 5:14). Donald Bloesch says that it is proper, on occasion, to hold healing services in the local church within the context of the worship. But the Word has to be proclaimed as the principal source of healing.⁵³ Also, the Eucharist is increasingly being regarded as a powerful occasion of healing.⁵⁴ The Korean mainline churches must realize that healing ministry is not a specialization of a widely well-known charismatic leader, but belongs to the whole Christian community. They have to recognize that healing ministry is an indispensable part of their total ministry. Karl Barth insists that the cure of souls, of which healing is a part, has to be exercised as a basic form of the ministry within the community of faith.⁵⁵

⁵³ Donald Bloesch, The Reform of the Church (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 137.

⁵⁴ John Richards, "The Church's Healing Ministry and Charismatic Renewal," Strange Gifts: A Guide to a Charismatic Renewal, eds. David Martin and Peter Mullen (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 154-58.

⁵⁵ Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, vol. 4/3, second half, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1962), 885-87.

Positive Confession

If God wants all of his children rich and healthy, Cho asks, how is one to achieve this? It is achievable through the exercise of a positive confession of faith.⁵⁶ The role of confession in our salvation has a parallel role in obtaining the blessings of health and wealth. Just as salvation comes through our confession (as Paul says in Romans 10:10, "It is with your mouth that you confess and are saved"), so we receive the blessings of health and wealth through confession.

According to Cho, one must go through several developmental stages--a period of incubation--before making a positive faith confession to acquire the blessings of health and wealth. For Cho, the method of incubation is a biblically based law of faith. In Gen. 1:2, when the whole earth was in a state of chaos, the Spirit of the Lord was moving upon the water. Cho interprets the verb rahap as fluttering or incubating, or brooding. Therefore, it can be translated as, The Holy Spirit was fluttering or incubating, or brooding over the water. The Holy Spirit was thus incubating the whole world, which was previously in a state of chaos. The word of creation was then given by the Holy Spirit and a new world came into being.⁵⁷

In order to understand this principle, we can look at a very simple example of the chicken and the egg. I am not interested in the proverbial question of which came first. No. I just want to point out the obvious fact that in order to have more chickens, one must have eggs. When a mother hen lays her eggs, she has to sit on

⁵⁶ The worldwide "faith movement's" use of confession means speaking aloud in order to make reality come into being through the force of faith.

⁵⁷ Paul Yonggi Cho, The Fourth Dimension, vol. 2 (South Plainfield, N.J.: Bridge, 1983), 17.

them, or incubate them, so that the eggs will hatch and become baby chicks.⁵⁸

Since God, so to speak, made use of incubation before speaking the word of creation, we have to follow that example before we confess health and wealth into being.

A successful incubation requires a clear-cut objective and goal. Cho points to his personal experience as an example. When he began his ministry in a poverty-stricken area of Seoul, he had little in the way of necessary material things. He badly needed a desk and chair for his studies and a bicycle for pastoral visitations. So he prayed, "Father! why should a child of the King of kings, and of the Lord of lords, live without a desk, chair and bed and walk mile after mile everyday?" He thus asked God to send him a desk, chair and bicycle.⁵⁹

Several months passed and nothing happened. Depressed, Cho started complaining. Then the Spirit told him that He could not answer Cho's prayer because it was not specific and clear-cut. Cho describes his conversation with the Lord:

⁵⁸ Cho, The Fourth Dimension, 2: 17-8. The German Old Testament scholar, Claus Westermann, in his important commentary on Genesis says:

One alleged meaning of the sentence can be rejected definitely: it is that which understands the verb as "brood" and refers to the world egg which was hatched and out of which the world arose. Jerome pointed out this meaning in the patristic period and it was supported in more recent times by Dillmann and Delitzsch and particularly by Gunkel from which it was taken over by a number of others This meaning is generally rejected today So the earlier translation "brood" no longer holds, nor does any reference to the world egg cosmogony. See Claus Westermann, Genesis I-II: A Commentary, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 107.

⁵⁹ Paul Yonggi Cho, The Fourth Dimension, vol. 1 (South Plainfield, N.J.: Logos International, 1979), 10.

The Spirit said, "Yes, that is the trouble with you, and with all my children. They beg me, demanding every kind of request, but they ask in such vague terms that I can't answer. Don't you know there are dozens of kinds of desks, chairs and bicycles? But you've simply asked me for a desk, chair and bicycle" I then said, "Lord, do you really want me to pray in definite terms?" This time the Lord led me to turn to Hebrews, the eleventh chapter: "Faith is the substance of things," clear-cut things, "hoped for."⁶⁰

After this conversation with the Lord, Cho says he prayed again, this time asking God for a desk made of Philippine mahogany, a chair made of an iron frame with rollers on the tips, and an American bicycle. "I ordered these things in such articulate terms that God could not make a mistake in delivering them." Cho reports that he received all of these from God within the next few months, and that this experience was a turning point in his life. He began to encourage his people to pray definitely and specifically because he was convinced that the Lord never welcomes vague prayer.

If you have a financial need, don't just ask God, "Lord, I need some money, so please help me!" We must pray, "Lord, I need \$10,000 for my unpaid bills, and I ask You to please send me \$10,000 so that I may pay these bills so that no shame may come to Your servant." Therefore, if you need \$10,000 ask for that amount specifically! If you need \$589.50 don't ask for around \$600, ask for the amount you need! God has always responded to direct and specific prayers.⁶¹

From this experience, Cho tells his congregation that four steps must be followed in order to achieve prosperity and health. First, they must have a definite and clear-cut goal if they want to become prosperous. And the primary goal should be placing God first in one's life by offering tithes to God.

⁶⁰ Cho, The Fourth Dimension, 1: 12.

⁶¹ Paul Yonggi Cho, Prayer: Key to Revival (Waco: Word, 1984), 148.

So we see that paying tithes is an act by which we acknowledge the sovereignty of God and practice obedience. It is the key of faith with which we can open the door of blessings prepared for us by Jesus Christ. By accepting Jesus Christ as our Saviour, we have acknowledged that spiritual sovereignty of God, and by giving our tithes we have admitted His supreme power over the material world. When we are obedient, it follows that God's blessings come to us and we prosper in all things.⁶²

Cho emphasizes that, if anyone wishes to become prosperous, he should not neglect to pay his or her tithes to the Lord. Tithing is God's promise of prosperity to His people. If Abraham prospered by paying tithes, modern believers should receive the same blessing.⁶³

Also, if anyone wants to be healed, he must have a clear-cut goal and desire for health. God cannot give gifts to people who are indifferent or who are not sure if they should accept the gifts. Those who want to be healed from the power of sickness should have a strong desire for perfect health.⁶⁴

The second step for incubating and hatching the eggs of health and prosperity is visualization. Just as a hen dreams chicks out of the egg, so we should clearly imagine the end result of our goal. If you long for a child in order to bring happiness to your childless home, then visualize that child in your dreams day and night. Then you will receive the child of your faith--prayer will bring it into being.⁶⁵ If you are looking for a husband, see your

⁶² Cho, Salvation, Health and Prosperity, 78.

⁶³ Paul Yonggi Cho, Solving Life's Problem (Seoul: Church Growth International, 1980), 27-41.

⁶⁴ Cho, Salvation, Health and Prosperity, 144.

⁶⁵ Cho, Prayer: Key to Revival, 149.

husband clearly in your imagination and ask God for him. God will answer your prayer.⁶⁶

In the Old Testament, God taught the childless Abraham how to visualize his son-to-be, Isaac. Visualization and imagination, Cho insists, are the language of the Holy Spirit. One night, Abraham was told to look at the stars and count them. God then promised Abraham that his offspring would become as numerous as those stars.

When he looked up at the stars, all he could see were the faces of his children, and suddenly he felt that he was hearing them call to him, "Father Abraham!" Those pictures came to his mind again and again, and became his own dreams and pictures. Those pictures immediately became part of his fourth dimension, in the language of spiritual visions and dreams. Those visions and dreams carried dominion over his one-hundred-year-old body, and it was soon transformed as if it were like a young body.⁶⁷

In Cho's view, visualization and imagination changed Abraham, not only in mind but in body. But the miracle also had to take place in Sarah, who had laughed when she first heard that God would make her a mother at the age of ninety. However, as Cho tells it, she began to visualize the return of her youth, dwelling upon the promise of God and incubating her dream. Soon she was wonderfully rejuvenated. Later in the Bible, King Abimelech found the old woman so attractive that he tried to take her as his concubine.

However, to imply that Abraham's visualization brought about the birth of Isaac is not biblical exegesis, but eisegesis, which is putting into a text meanings that are not there. It denies God's grace. The birth of Isaac was a

⁶⁶ Cho, The Fourth Dimension, 1: 48.

⁶⁷ Cho, The Fourth Dimension, 1: 49.

free gift and would have occurred regardless of Abraham and Sarah's "visualization."

What moved Abraham to a new response? Surely it is not because he feels new generative powers in his loins. Nor because he has new expectations for Sarah. The new promise for his life is not any expectation of flesh and blood. Rather, he has come to rely on the promise speaker. He has not permitted God to be not a hypothesis about the future, but the voice around which his life is organized.⁶⁸

For Cho, visualization and imagination are pivotal for hatching prosperity and health. He contends that, although many Korean businessmen suffered during the severe economic recession in Korea caused by the energy crisis, his teaching of visualization was so successful that no one in his church suffered bankruptcy.⁶⁹ To a failing businessman, Cho advised, "Start counting the money in the empty cash register and look at all of the people lining up outside to get into your crowded store."⁷⁰ According to Cho, the businessman returned with a thousand-dollar tithe within two months.

The third step for incubating the results of health and prosperity is to have the substance or assurance. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). "Substance" in the Greek language is hupostasis. In English, this can be rendered "title deed," or "legal paper." When we have a clear goal and visualize the results, then we should pray until we receive the substance, or assurance. Once we have the title deed

⁶⁸ Walter Brueggemann, Genesis (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 144.

⁶⁹ Cho, The Fourth Dimension, 2: 68.

⁷⁰ Paul Yonggi Cho, More Than Numbers (Waco: Word, 1984), 106-7.

or the legal paper, the promise is bound to come to us because legally it belongs to us.⁷¹

When we pray that our sickness may be healed, we should pray with conviction and faith as if we had the title deed in our hands. We should claim our health like the man who claims the ownership of land with a title deed.⁷²

Lastly, to have a successful incubation, one must release the substance and assurance of faith through oral confession. In Genesis, when the Holy Spirit had been incubating the chaotic world, the Word of God was released and the world was created out of nothing. Likewise, we have to confess the substance that our faith assures us we shall have. By confessing, we can make potential reality come into being.

Since confession creates reality, our success in life depends upon whether we speak positively or negatively, since we are going to get what we speak about. If we speak about our sickness constantly, sickness will riddle our whole body. If we speak about our being poor always, then poverty will surround our life.⁷³ But if we keep saying that we can achieve success, then our body will respond appropriately. We should speak the word of faith, and feed our nervous system with a vocabulary of constructive and victorious words in order to become prosperous.⁷⁴ Therefore, according to Cho, believers must confess the following:

⁷¹ Cho, The Fourth Dimension, 2: 28-9.

⁷² Cho, Salvation, Health and Prosperity, 151.

⁷³ Paul Yonggi Cho, Successful Living (La Canada, Calif.: Mountain Press, 1977), 84.

⁷⁴ Cho, The Fourth Dimension, 1: 71.

I am sure I'll be blessed. Jesus made me worthy when He shed His blood for me. So the project I am planning with His approval will certainly succeed.⁷⁵

Cho further advises:

We should confess our healing with our mouth just as if we had regained our health already, because there is healing power in our speech ... our speech now commands the whole nervous system of the body so that it works to produce health. In accordance with that command, the energy of life is provided for the whole body.⁷⁶

One of the more disturbing aspects of Cho's preaching is that he so often quotes personal revelations, prophecies, visions, or dreams he claims to have had from God. In many instances, he shares his lengthy conversation with the Spirit to support his arguments. "The Spirit told me" is often used by Cho as his authority in biblical interpretations.

Then God spoke ... "but nothing will happen--no soul will be saved, no broken home rejoined, until you speak the word. Don't just beg and beg for what you need. Give the word As I did when creating the world, speak forth. Say 'let there be light,' or say 'let there be firmament.'" I then apologized to God: "Lord, I'm sorry. I'll speak forth."⁷⁷

Cho says that this revelation from God was a turning point in his life. After this experience, he began to exhort his congregation accordingly.

Claim and speak the word of assurance, for your word actually goes out and creates. God spoke and the world came into being. Your word is the material which the Holy Spirit uses to create.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Cho, Salvation, Health and Prosperity, 110.

⁷⁶ Cho, Salvation, Health and Prosperity, 154.

⁷⁷ Cho, The Fourth Dimension, 1: 73-4.

⁷⁸ Cho, The Fourth Dimension, 1: 31.

Cho chides his fellow Christians who are afraid to speak forth the word of command. In the Gospels, Jesus used the spoken word to change and create. His disciples did the same. Thus, we need to learn the lost art of speaking forth the word of command.

So powerful is the spoken word, says Cho, that we can even create the presence of Jesus through it. If we speak about the divine healing, then we will have the healing of Christ. If we speak of the miracle-performing Jesus, then the presence of the miracle-performing Jesus is released. Jesus is bound by our lips and by our words.

What are you going to do with Jesus who is riding on your tongue? Are you going to release Him for the blessing of others? Or are you going to lock Him up with a still tongue and a closed mouth?⁷⁹

Positive confession, when grounded and balanced, can help struggling Christians to overcome difficulties and experience the victorious living that Christ has made available to us.⁸⁰ However, when it is taken to an extreme, as in the case of Cho's preaching, it distorts the biblical message. It makes God subservient to human words, and man as sovereign as God. It denies the freedom of God. God does not need to rely on the "method of incubation" to create the world out of nothing. In Cho's teaching, God seems to be irrelevant and unnecessary, because we have the power to obtain what we want by applying "spiritual laws" of incubation, by "visualizing" and by positive confession.⁸¹

In the creation saga in Genesis, what God said came to pass, because it was God who spoke. The power is in God, not in words. Anyone, other than

⁷⁹ Cho, The Fourth Dimension, 1: 86.

⁸⁰ Bruce Barron, The Health and Wealth Gospel (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity, 1987), 134.

⁸¹ Barron, 112.

God, could repeat the same words any number of times but nothing could be created.⁸² Many who practice positive confession have repeatedly confessed aloud their healing and prosperity, but failed to receive it. Because of what they perceive as a lack of faith, they add a guilty conscience to their existing miseries.⁸³ From a biblical perspective, our spoken language has no inherent power, apart from the Spirit working in love through us.

Cho's threefold blessing appeals to Koreans who want to be prosperous and healthy, partially due to the shamanistically oriented Korean mind. Cho proclaims the benefits of Christ for all believers, but rarely does he speak of the claims of the cross, except in tithing--an essential condition for receiving material blessings. The implication of Cho's message is that "Jesus went to the cross so the believer would not have to."⁸⁴ However, one cannot experience the liberating message of the cross and resurrection of Jesus without submitting to its claims, because "to believe in the crucified Messiah is to submit to the claim of his cross."⁸⁵

Biblical preaching requires an emphasis on the central themes of the Gospel rather than on a few marginal verses, particularly where there are clear warnings against the very thing being taught, as in the case of wealth.⁸⁶ Thus, if our interpretation of a particular passage contradicts the clear teaching of the whole Bible, we have gone astray in our interpretation. Instead of

⁸² Dave Hunt, Beyond Seduction (Eugene: Harvest House, 1987), 54.

⁸³ Hunt, 57.

⁸⁴ D. R. McConnell, A Different Gospel (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1988), 178.

⁸⁵ McConnell, 178.

⁸⁶ Hunt, 68-9.

preaching the whole counsel of God, Cho is "trivializing" the gospel and making it a consumer religion.⁸⁷

Critical study of Cho's preaching is important because he is becoming the model for many preachers who desire a large, rich and growing church. There are many pastors who will indiscriminately adopt any method and technique that will ensure church growth. Every preacher, therefore, should ask about his sermon, "Is it true to the text?" rather than "Is it helpful?"

Not surprisingly, one element lacking in Cho's sermons is the prophetic message. In most of his preaching, Cho uses the constitutive hermeneutic of stressing God's special blessings of health and wealth when his congregation needs to be challenged by the message of God's demand for social justice, peacemaking and human rights. Cho rarely uses the prophetic hermeneutic to confront and awaken his congregation to God's calling for discipleship, except in giving tithes to his church. With respect to the social responsibility of the preacher, Cho says:

To preach means to deliver a message that is exactly what the Scripture says. If a preacher talks about current political events, economic and social problems, ethics and morality, congregations cannot unburden their heavy yokes of secular worldly matters in the church.⁸⁸

Cho has a specific answer to the complex structural problem of poverty. He argues that the poor cannot be freed from poverty until they visualize themselves as children of the King of kings, and of the Lord of lords, and see themselves as the heirs of God's eternal resources in Christ.

⁸⁷ Margaret Paloma, The Charismatic Movement (Boston: Twayne Publ., 1982), 182.

⁸⁸ Paul Yonggi Cho, Nanun Irutkeh Sulkyo Handa (I preach this way) (Seoul: Seoul Bookstore, 1984), 158.

What is the answer to all of the poverty and misery in this world? Men must have a change in thinking. This will produce a change in living that will change their material circumstances.⁸⁹

Positive thinking and visualization, however, are simply not enough to turn the complex problems of poverty into plenty, war into peace, conflicts into reconciliation.

Inadequate biblical exegesis, hermeneutics and theology led Cho to espouse what Luther once called a theology of glory.⁹⁰ A theology of glory, or triumphalism, leads people to believe that success in business, good health, and general good fortune are evidences of their strong faith. Thus, those who do not enjoy good fortune are led to believe that they lack faith. Triumphalism is most comforting to the rich, the powerful, and the successful. It is a "religion for winners with nothing much to say to losers except that, if they had enough faith, they too could be winners."⁹¹

What is crucially needed in the Korean pulpit is a message of the cross. A theology of the cross does not deny the healing power of God. It rejoices and expresses thanks when healing is experienced. But it does not believe that miraculous healing is the norm for everyone, and the lack of such miracles is not seen as a lack of faith. A theology of the cross affirms that God is not simply known in the person who had been cured miraculously of a terminal illness, but that even more is known in the "peace that passes understanding"

⁸⁹ Paul Yonggi Cho, The Leap of Faith, 99.

⁹⁰ Since "glory" is a positive word in Christian circles, Lutheran theologian William Horden says we can bring out Luther's meaning better if we substitute the term "triumphalism" for "theology of glory." See his book Experience and Faith, 85-86.

⁹¹ Frederick Dale Brunner and William Horden, The Holy Spirit: Shy Member of the Trinity (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 70.

that sustains the terminally ill patient.⁹² Jesus never promised every Christian success in business, good health, and general good fortune. Christians are living between the times, and our final victory or fulfillment is not yet completely realized. However, because of the gift of the Spirit, we have the strength to continue on our journey, pressing forward to the goal that God has promised us.

Karl Barth says that theology is always "theo-anthropology."⁹³ Theology and preaching are always about God and man at the same time. But God should come first. Cho's sermon is not theocentric or Christocentric, but rather anthropocentric. Of course, Cho talks about the cross and resurrection of Christ in his sermons, but always in the sense of meeting our needs and solving our problems. In Cho's sermon, man becomes the center and reality.⁹⁴

Cho's central message is the threefold blessing in Christ based on 3 John 2. This marginal verse is the hermeneutic key for all of his biblical interpretation. No matter what texts he is preaching from, the central thrust of his message is the threefold blessing. The intentions, claims and functions of the text do not matter to him, because he has a prepackaged message.

No longer does scripture have the role of speaking its unique Word to us; scripture becomes a tool in our hands to serve our purposes. Rather than first listening for that word from "the strange world within the Bible" and being obedient to it and guided by it, we make the scripture a propaganda device.⁹⁵

⁹² Brunner and Horden, 68-9.

⁹³ Karl Barth, Evangelical Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 12.

⁹⁴ Joong-Pio Lee, Kyohoe Sungiang Kwa Kerygma Sulkyo [The theory on the development of kerygmatic preaching for the growth of Korean churches] (Seoul: Qumran Publ., 1988), 133.

⁹⁵ Hobbie, "Next to the Last Link," 124.

CHAPTER 6

Prophetic Preaching

Introduction

Contemporary Korean prophetic preaching is represented by a group of theologians and pastors engaged in *minjung* theology. *Minjung* is a Korean word that is a combination of two Chinese characters, *min* and *jung*. *Min* carries the meaning of "people" and *jung* the "mass." Thus, the literal meaning of *minjung* is "the mass of the people," or simply "the people."¹ However, this literal translation is inadequate to express the deep meaning of the word.

Minjung theologians say that *minjung* is not a concept or object that can be defined. Rather, it signifies a living reality that is ever dynamic, changing, and complex.² According to Professor Han Wang-Sang:

The *minjung* are those who are oppressed politically, exploited economically, alienated sociologically, and kept uneducated in cultural and intellectual matters. In a situation where political power plays the dominant role the politically oppressed ones are the *minjung*.³

Thus, one may say that, where there is political oppression, economic exploitation, and socio-cultural alienation, *minjung* is present. Therefore, a woman belongs to *minjung* when she is dominated by male-oriented social and

¹ David Kwang-Sun Suh, "Minjung and Theology in Korea," *Minjung Theology*, ed. Yong-Bock Kim (Singapore: CCA, 1981), 17-8.

² Yong-Bock Kim, "Messiah and Minjung," *Minjung Theology*, ed. Yong-Bock Kim (Singapore: CCA, 1981), 186.

³ Young-Hak Hyun, "Minjung the Suffering Servant and Hope," *Korean Roots*, May/June 1983: 145.

cultural structures. An ethnic minority becomes a minjung group when it is politically and economically discriminated against by a majority ethnic group.⁴

The theology of minjung is for the oppressed, the poor, and the powerless in Korean society. It emerged as a result of the experiences of people involved in the human rights movement and in the mission of the church with the industrial workers, farmers and the lower echelon of Korean society, namely, the minjung. It was born out of Korean Christians' active participation in search of a humane and just society during the military dictatorship of President Chung-Hee Park in the 1970s. Thus, one may say that the theology of minjung is a political hermeneutics of the Gospel and a political interpretation of the Korean Christian experience of suffering for human rights and justice as they apply to minjung.⁵

Roots of Minjung Theology

Although minjung theology is a new theological movement in Korea, the prophetic interpretation of the Scriptures is not new. From its inception, Korean Christianity has been a center for nationalism and has grown as the religion of an oppressed nation and people. When Christianity was introduced to Korea, Confucianism, which had been the foundational ethos of the Yi Dynasty, was too ineffective to rejuvenate the nation. Thus, Christianity was received as the bearer of a new religion and civilization. For many patriotic men and women, the Christian gospel was a message of liberation and freedom. They looked to Christianity for their national salvation as a people and

⁴ David Kwang-Sun Suh, Theology, Ideology and Culture (Hong Kong: WSCF, 1983), 11.

⁵ David Suh, "Minjung and Theology in Korea," Minjung Theology, ed. Yong-Bock Kim, 19.

as a nation, and hoped that Christianity would become the vehicle of national independence and modernization.

When Korea lost its sovereignty to Japan in 1910, the Christian church was the one remaining influential organization in Korea. "All eyes were turned and many Christians saw in the church the only hope of the country."⁶ However, the missionaries wanted to depoliticize Korean Christians in light of Japanese opposition to the mission policy. In 1901, the Presbyterian Missionary Council made a clear statement:

The church belongs to God. The church building is not a place to discuss social problems and national or political events, but only the place of worship ... the Christians are advised against using the living room of the parsonage for political purposes.⁷

When a heightened political consciousness on the part of Korean Christians led to a desire for liberation from Japanese rule, missionaries channeled this yearning for national salvation into a mystical religious experience through revival meetings. W. N. Blair, an American Presbyterian missionary, wrote: "We felt that embittered souls need to have their thoughts taken away from the national salvation to their own personal relation with the Master."⁸ In the same vein, a Methodist American missionary, R. A. Hardie, told Korean church leaders that prayer was the only way to solve Korea's national problems. Therefore, the Korean church should pray and seek the experience

⁶ William Newton Blair, Gold in Korea (New York: Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1946), 6.

⁷ Kuristoin Hoebo [Christian Times, Korea], Oct. 1901: 3.

⁸ Blair, 63.

of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, eschewing any political action on behalf of the nation.⁹

After the Great Revival of 1907, which was jointly sponsored by Korean churches and the Missionary Council, rigid fundamentalism, with its emphasis on personal salvation, dominated the Korean church, especially the Presbyterian church. Under the influence of missionary teachings, fundamentalism has held sway in Korea. Arthur Brown describes the typical theology of the missionary at that early time:

The typical missionary of the first quarter century after the opening of the country was a man of puritan type. He kept the Sabbath as our New England forefathers did a century ago. He looked upon dancing, smoking, and card-playing as sins in which no true follower of Christ should indulge. In theology and biblical criticism he was strongly conservative, and he held as a vital truth the premillennial view of the second coming of Christ. The higher criticism and liberal theology were deemed dangerous heresies.¹⁰

Even though fundamentalism held sway in Korea, the prophetic spirit had not been completely wiped out. When the March First Independence Movement broke out in 1919, Christians were the moving force behind it. They not only inspired national yearnings for independence, but also suffered for their nation. At that time, "to be a Christian was to be a patriot."¹¹ The Korean church's stand against Japanese Shinto worship in the 1930s was due not only to its faithful obedience to the Second Commandment, but also must be understood in the context of the Korean Christian's nationalism. Under

⁹ Blair, 63-4.

¹⁰ Arthur Brown, Mystery of the Far East (New York: Scribners, 1919), 540.

¹¹ Samuel H. Moffett, The Christians in Korea (New York: Friendship Press, 1962), 70.

Japanese colonial rule, Korean Christians identified themselves with the suffering Israelites in Egypt. And they yearned for the gift of God's liberation from oppression. Yong-Bock Kim writes:

Korean Christians applied the analogy of Israel to the Korean situation extensively. Korea was to Korean Christians the Oriental Israel with a similar geography and with a similar political fate; Israel's relationship with God and his people's suffering and humiliation under foreign rule was like the destiny of the Korean people. The most striking analogy was the comparison of Exodus under Moses to Korea's struggle for national liberation from the Japanese colonial power and Jesus' struggle under the Roman domination of Israel.¹²

In 1950, only five years after the nation's liberation from Japanese colonial rule, the tragic Korean War broke out. Korean Christians once again struggled against oppression and persecution, this time from the Communists. Thus, the ongoing struggle by Korean Christians for freedom and human rights, even though it represents a minority voice, is a continuation of this vital tradition of Korean Protestantism. Korean minjung theology is deeply rooted in the history of the Korean Christian struggle for justice, freedom and national independence.¹³

Prophetic Preaching as Pastoral Preaching

Korean minjung theologians argue that, in order to engage in minjung theology, one has to participate in the minjung's struggles, their pain and agony, hope and aspirations, frustration and despair. Above all, one must have the experience of participating in minjung's *han*, because the Christian gospel

¹² Yong-Bock Kim, "Korean Christianity as a Messianic Movement of the People," Minjung Theology, ed. Yong-Bock Kim, 106.

¹³ Cyris Hee-Suk Moon, "Minjung Theology: An Introduction," Pacific Theological Review 18 (Winter 1985): 5.

cannot be understood without knowing the pain and *han* of minjung.¹⁴ What, then, is *han*? According to Hyun Young-Hak:

Han is a sense of unresolved resentment against injustices suffered, a sense of helplessness because of the overwhelming odds against, a feeling of the total abandonedness ("why hast thou forsaken me?"), a feeling of acute pain of sorrow in one's guts and bowels making the whole body writhe and wriggle, and an obstinate urge to take "revenge" and to right the wrong--all these combined.¹⁵

Han is the major characteristic of the Korean minjung. Their life has traditionally been characterized by suffering. For generations, their families suffered under the feudalistic system and at the hands of corrupt local bureaucrats. They also suffered numerous foreign invasions. They endured humiliation under Japanese colonial rule for 36 years. Even the national liberation of 1945 did not improve their lives, for the nation was divided into North and South by the two superpowers.

The history of the Korean minjung is a history of *han*. They are the people of and with *han*. The minjung are a people of *han* because they are politically oppressed, economically poor, and culturally alienated. One may say that their existence is *han* itself. Since *han* is an underlying feeling of Korean minjung, the poet Ko Eun once exclaimed that "We Koreans were born from the womb of '*han*' and brought up in the womb of '*han*.'" ¹⁶ Minjung theologians who encountered minjung in the Korean historical and social contexts found minjung in their reading of the Scripture. They met minjung--the

¹⁴ A. Sung Park, "Theology of Han," Quarterly Review 9 (Spring 1989), 50.

¹⁵ Young-Hak Hyun, "Minjung the Suffering Servant and Hope," 148.

¹⁶ Suh Nam-Dong, "Towards a Theology of Han," Minjung Theology, ed. Yong-Bock Kim, 54.

Hebrew slaves in Egypt and the Ochlos in the Gospel of Mark.¹⁷ When they read the text with the horizon of minjung, they were surprised that the Scripture itself was a book of minjung. Thus, the living interaction of the hermeneutical circle took place when the liberating event of minjung in the text shed light on the Korean minjung's life situation and the Korean minjung's life experience shed light on the Scripture.¹⁸

Minjung theologians and preachers read in the Bible the *han* of the oppressed. When Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him, the *han* of Abel was heard by God. The Lord said to Cain: "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground" (Gen. 4:10).¹⁹ When the people of Israel groaned under their bondage in Egypt, they cried out their *han* to God for liberation and "Their cry under bondage came up to God" (Exod. 2:23). God heard their cry and liberated the people from their bondage.²⁰

The work of a poet, according to the Korean poet Kim Chi-ha, is to transmit the *han* of the people in his poetry. Influenced by Kim, the minjung

¹⁷ A minjung Biblical scholar, Byung M. Ahn, identifies the minjung with "amhaaretz," a low class of people in the first century B.C., and "ochlos," the people of the alienated low class in the Gospel of Mark, as opposed to "laos," the people of God. See Byung-Moo Ahn's article, "Jesus and the Minjung in the Gospel of Mark," *Minjung Theology*, ed. Yong-Bock Kim, 148-49.

¹⁸ Sung-Joon Park, "Minjung Shinhak uh Sungkyuk wa Kwaje," [The nature of minjung theology and its task], *Pastoral Monthly* 12 (Oct. 1988): 113-14.

¹⁹ All references are to the Revised Standard version, unless otherwise indicated.

²⁰ David Kwang-Sun Suh, "The Priesthood of Han," *Reformed World* 39 (Dec. 1986): 602-3.

theologian Suh Nam-Dong calls upon the Korean church to be a transmitter of the *han* of the oppressed and poor. Suh claims that the prophetic and priestly functions of the church should not be separated from each other but rather combined. Suh also challenges the Korean church to become the comforter in an effort to resolve the *han* of the minjung and to sublimate it into the dynamic energy required for spiritual transformation.

In this historical situation, what does it mean to be called to participate in the *missio dei*? I am not suggesting you give up the priestly role of the church. That is theologically mistaken. Those who witnessed to the Gospel are not only prophets but also priests as well. In *missio dei* we must carry our priestly function faithfully. Priestly function is not to give comfort to the rich and the powerful and bless their unrighteous exploitation. It is not to hypnotize the oppressed and numb their will for change and resistance. Truly, it is the function of the priests to heal the wounds of the minjung and enable them to restore their self-respect and courage to respond to their historical aspirations. This is to resolve their *han*. This is to comfort the *han*-ridden hearts of the people. I am urging you to become the priests of *han*.²¹

Minjung theologians and preachers see themselves called to the priesthood of *han* in their prophetic witness to the Gospel in today's Korea. And they call other Korean Christians to the prophetic priesthood to resolve the minjung's *han* through solidarity and by articulating their cries and longings.²² Minjung theology makes a very important contribution by pointing out the convergence of the prophetic and priestly tasks of the ministry.

Many believe that the prophetic and pastoral tasks are two distinctly different functions of the ministry. Often, those who are engaged in the social justice movement scoff at those Christians who seem to be disinterested in

²¹ Nam-Dong Suh, Minjung Shinhak uh Tamgu [Exploration of minjung theology] (Seoul: Hangil Sa, 1983), 43.

²² David Kwang-Sun Suh, 604.

social and political reforms, while many who are practicing a pastoral ministry dismiss the former as liberals. While the roles of pastor and prophet may seem incompatible, the pastoral and prophetic functions must not be set in opposition to each other. Rather, the prophetic and pastoral work of ministry are interdependent.²³ The prophet is more than the angry young man who pours out his dissatisfaction upon his hearers.

Prophetic ministry does not necessarily imply spectacular social crusading or abrasive indignation. The Hebrew prophets were frequently regarded as the troublemakers of Israel, but, in fact, "They sought to conserve the deepest truths of the religious tradition through their future visionary and social criticism."²⁴ Walter Bruggemann also says that the prophetic task is not to be understood primarily as denunciation or rejection. Rather, "The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us."²⁵ The prophet, according to Bruggemann, is the poet, the artist who articulates an imagination and evokes a vision for the faith community. The prophet destabilizes the present system for the privileged few by proclaiming an alternative truth about the reign of God where justice and shalom prevail. Bruggemann notes that, in the exodus, Israel emerges from an oppressive Egyptian royal system as an alternative culture marked by the compassion and justice of God.

²³ Peter Paris, "The Minister as Prophet," Princeton Seminary Bulletin 7 (Feb. 1986): 15.

²⁴ William K. McElvaney, Preaching from Camelot to Covenant (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 57.

²⁵ Bruggemann, The Prophetic Imagination, 13.

Prophecy is not in any overt, concrete sense political or social action. It is rather an assault on public imagination, aimed at showing that the present presumed world is not absolute, but that a thinkable alternative can be imagined, characterized, and lived in. The destabilization is, first of all, not revolutionary overthrow, but it is making available an alternative imagination that makes one aware that the presumed world is imagined, not given. Thus, the prophetic is an alternative to a positivism that is incapable of alternative, uneasy with critique, and so inclined to conformity.²⁶

The Bible witnesses that the voices of the excluded and marginalized cannot be silenced. The cry of the poor and marginalized means the current system is not working and is not giving life. In response to the cry of the voiceless, the task of the prophet was to challenge the dominant system to transform itself for the sake of a just society.

Bruggemann turns to the prophet Elijah, in whom the prophetic and pastoral task converges. Elijah practices pastoral care with the widow by being present in her need. He practices the prophetic ministry with the false prophets by exposing their fraud and by confronting the king with the word of God.²⁷ Daniel L. Migliore claims that the biblical unity of the prophetic and pastoral ministry can be found in the passion of God. The Biblical witness proclaims a God who is a supremely passionate advocate of justice for the poor, but at the same time is personally affected by the suffering of people. In fact, He takes up their suffering and makes it His own in His freedom. The ministry of Jesus is a ministry of God's passionate love and justice. The gospel story

²⁶ Walter Bruggemann, "The Prophet as a Destabilizing Presence," The Pastor as Prophet, eds. Earl E. Sheip and R. H. Sunderland (New York: Pilgrim, 1985), 52-3.

²⁷ Bruggemann, "The Prophet as a Destabilizing Presence," The Pastor as Prophet, eds. Earl E. Sheip and R. H. Sunderland, 64-77. Also Bruggemann's article, "The Embarrassing Footnote," Theology Today 44 (April 1987): 5-14.

presents Jesus not only as liberator, but as sufferer who freely and redemptively suffers for suffering men and women; not only as judge, but also as one judged in our place for the redemption. Thus, in light of the biblical witness of the passion of God, the pastoral ministry must be prophetic; and, in light of the passion of God, the prophetic ministry must be pastoral.²⁸

The emphasis placed by Korean minjung theologians and preachers on the unity of the prophetic and pastoral ministry is a very important contribution to the Korean church. For too long, the Korean church has been influenced by a dualistic mode of thinking. Accordingly, the majority of Korean Christians believe that the church should be concerned about the soul only, and should not address the political, social and economic issues of the day. The Reformed emphasis on the Lordship of Christ is confined within the church. Prophetic preaching is rarely heard in the Korean pulpit, because it doesn't add to the numerical growth or increase the tithe offering or produce other financial contributions from the congregation. The prophetic mode of preaching is regarded as dangerously liberal or as representing new theologies that deny the authority of Scripture. Thus, many preachers are afraid of being labeled as liberal if they preach social and political issues. As Presbyterian seminary homiletician Chang-Bok Chung points out:

²⁸ Daniel L. Migliore, "The Passion of God and the Prophetic Task of Pastoral Ministry," The Pastor as Prophet, eds. Earl E. Shelp and R. H. Sunderland (New York: Pilgrim, 1985), 114-34.

Can we say John the Baptist was a liberal theologian? Was the prophet Isaiah a new theologian? Was Elijah influenced by liberalism? Was the prophet Nathan a radical? To all these questions, the answer is "No." We preachers, following the biblical prophetic traditions, have to move the Word of God to our contemporary society to shed light on it. Until our last breath, we have the responsibility of telling what is right and wrong in light of God's Word.²⁹

Being both pastor and prophet is not easy. Reinhold Niebuhr experienced the difficulty of combining prophetic preaching and pastoral work at his first parish in Detroit.³⁰ Prophetic preaching is not only for the itinerants. It should be for all preachers who speak God's Word from their deep conviction and their love for their congregations. Pastoral solidarity with the people is one of the most important prophetic tasks, along with faithfulness to the Word.³¹ Joong-Pio Lee is a well-known pastor of the Presbyterian Hanshin Church, one of the fastest growing churches in Seoul. He preaches in the pastoral-prophetic mode, but draws a large congregation because his message is deeply rooted in Scripture and shows his warm pastoral care for his flock. In his preaching, he stands in solidarity with them in their struggles, pains and hopes. His pastoral ministry shows us that, if the prophetic message is based on the faithful exegesis and interpretation of the text and loving concern for the parishioners, it will not become a hindrance for church growth as many would believe.

In his sermon titled "The Church Should Listen to the Cries and Groans of Minjung" (Text: Exod. 3:1-12), Lee insists:

²⁹ Chang-Bok Chung, "Hankuk Kyohoe Sulkyo uh Youhyung Bunsuk", 131-132.

³⁰ Reinhold Niebuhr, Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic (Cleveland: World Publ., 1929), 74.

³¹ Willimon, Integrative Preaching, 88.

We have to listen to the cries and groans of minjung to resolve their *han* There are groanings in the college campus where the academic freedom in pursuing the truth has been violated and baptized by police tear gas instead. There are laments in the courts where conscientious judges are forced to sentence "guilty" on the innocents. There are agonies of newspaper reporters who are forced to resign because of their pursuit of freedom of expression. There are laments and tearful prayers in the prison cells where conscientious prophets are imprisoned for their human rights movements.³²

Lee says that God, who heard the cries of the Israelites in Egypt, is now hearing the minjung's *han*. And God is looking for men and women who will listen to the cries of the minjung and participate in their *han*. If the church will not listen to their cries, it will lose ground on which to stand and the nation's judgment will be upon her. Lee challenges his congregation to respond to God's calling to participate in the minjung's suffering, to heal their wounds and to give themselves as offerings for that cause.

In this very moment of Korean history, what Korea needs is righteous men and women. A nation or race without the righteous has no hope. A nation does not fall because it lacks politicians or tycoons. A nation will not fall because it is in short supply of learned men. But a nation or race will fall if it does not have the righteous. This is the witness of the Scripture and the lesson of history.³³

Lee knows the prophetic ministry is an integral part of pastoral ministry. When the people sense that the preacher is standing with them under God's judgment, and when the preacher tells them what the love of Christ compels him to say, the congregation will demonstrate its willingness to be challenged by the message. Prophetic preaching is not the fruit of an angry preacher's

³² Joong-Pio Lee, Juil Insaeng uh Hangbok [Happiness of living on Sunday] (Seoul: Bomron Sa, 1986), 359-60.

³³ Joong-Pio Lee, Juil Insaeng uh Hangbok, 364.

scolding, but rather is pastoral preaching on behalf of the congregation. Therefore, "Whoever wants to preach prophetically must earn the right to do so by compassionate critical solidarity with those addressed. It is not enough to be right."³⁴

Preaching as Telling Minjung's Story

Minjung theology has been formed to tell the stories of the suffering minjung: the stories of the jailbirds, the young workers, the teenage street girls, and the broken farmers--those who were exploited and dislocated in the process of industrialization and development. And it tells the stories of the clergy and students who were court-martialed, and of the university professors and newspaper reporters who were kidnapped and abused in the torture chambers of the Korean CIA for their human rights activities in supporting a democratic Korea.³⁵ According to minjung theologians and preachers, it is the task of Christians to articulate the cries and groans of minjung. If they are silent on the *han* and suffering of the minjung, it is as Jesus said: "If my disciples keep silence, the very stones will cry out" (Luke 19:40).³⁶ Minjung theologians believe that suffering and *han* are revealed most fully in the stories, folk songs, poems, and mask dances of the Korean minjung.

Unlike the liberation theologians, who use Marxism as a tool for analyzing the Latin-American socio-economic situation, Korean minjung theologians use the stories of the minjung as the tools with which to effectively

³⁴ Keck, 120.

³⁵ David Kwang-Sun Suh, "Theology of Story Telling: A Theology by Minjung," Ministerial Formation 31 (Sept. 1985): 14.

³⁶ David Kwang-Sun Suh, "The Priesthood of Han," 603.

unmask the structural evil of a deeply oppressive society.³⁷ As minjung stories and poems illuminate the present social reality, they are the vital hermeneutical key for understanding Korean history or society. In the minjung stories, one can discern how God works in history and what he requires of us.³⁸ Korean minjung stories are filled with the *han* of the victims of starvation, exploitation, oppression, war and tyranny. They expose the contradictions and absurdities of society, the injustice of the oppressor, and the deeply hidden *han* of the people. Their social biographies contain the history and aspirations of the suffering people, their courageous resistance against their rulers, and their vision of a new society.

Minjung theologians insist, therefore, that it is important for the Christian witness in Korea today to proclaim these stories. Minjung theologians and preachers seek to learn as much as they can about all the forgotten, even nameless dead whose lives of suffering must not be forgotten. Too often, their story is not told in the history written by the victors. Their suffering should spur Christians to act for a just society, trusting that their ultimate vindication will be realized by the God who raised Jesus from the dead. Minjung theologians want to retrieve the voice snatched away from all these

³⁷ A. Sung Park, "Minjung Theology: A Korean Contextual Theology," Pacific Theological Review 18 (Winter 1985): 18.

³⁸ Tong-Whan Moon, "Doing Theology in Korea with Reference to Theological Education: From the Minjung Theological View Point," East Asian Journal of Theology 4 (Oct. 1986): 35.

nameless ones by the rulers of history.³⁹ By using the "hermeneutics of suspicion and retrieval," minjung theology challenges Korean Christians to hear and see the Christian tradition (biblical and church history) and the Korean minjung tradition "from the perspective of the privileged to the ancient prophets and Jesus alike--the perspective of the outcast, the powerless, the oppressed, and the marginalized."⁴⁰ Minjung theologians want to retrieve, narrate and tell the stories of minjung so that all of us may be transformed by hearing them. This point is illustrated in the following true story of a young laborer, a minjung:

The Death of Chun Tae-Il. He was born as the first son of a poor family in Taegu on August 26, 1948. When he was young, one of his younger brothers died from malnutrition. From the time he was eight years old, he had to work as a peddler, a shoe-shine boy, a newspaper boy, a rear-car pusher, and so forth. In terms of education, he did not finish grade school. At the age of sixteen, he was hired as an apprentice at a sewing machine shop in the Peace Market in Seoul. From the beginning, his heart was broken when he saw how young laborers were exploited and dehumanized at the Peace Market. About 20,000 sewing machinists, mostly women, were working there. Their average age was 18; 40 percent of the laborers were between 12-15 years old. They were paid 70-100 Won for fifteen hours a day. (At that time, the average money the owners of the shops spent for lunch was 200 Won). Their working conditions were utterly miserable; no beam of sunlight could penetrate their working places and no fresh air was available. The average work of fifteen hours a day, twenty-eight days a month wore out their youthful bodies. Many workers had bronchitis, nervous breakdowns, irregular menstruation, etc. One day, seeing

³⁹ David Tracy, The Analogical Imagination (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 396. According to Yong-Bock Kim, "The history of the bottom of society is unknown in most cases. In this sense the Bible is a unique book, recording the stories of slaves, the poor, the oppressed and the persecuted." See his article, "Minjung Social Biography and Theology," Asia Journal of Theology 1 (Oct. 1987): 523.

⁴⁰ Tracy, 398.

a young sewing machinist vomit blood, Tae-II was so shocked that he could not sleep for days afterward.

This incident compelled him to organize a labor union and study labor laws. In March 1969, he was fired by his employer because he was organizing a labor union. The next year, in his deep disappointment, he went into his church's prayer house in Samkak Mount, and spent six months there working as a construction worker during the daytime and praying at night. During this time, he resolved to protest against the dehumanization of the young laborers at the Peace Market by using an ultimate method--killing himself, if he should fail in organizing a labor union. (His diary shows this determination clearly: "I must go back to you, my poor brothers and sisters I am willing to give my life for you ... the second Saturday of August, the day of resolution Dear God, have mercy upon me struggling to be a dew drop.") In the same year, Tae-II found a sewing machinist job at the Peace Market again, and began to organize a labor union gradually. On November 13, 1970, with 500 of his fellow laborers, he demonstrated in front of the Peace Market with the placard saying, "We are not machines." When this peaceful demonstration was blocked and dispersed by a special police unit, he poured gasoline on his body, lit it, and died shouting, "Do not exploit the young lives! Let me not die in vain!" At the age of twenty-two, Tae-II presented his body and soul as a living sacrifice before God for the sake of advocating a better life for his suffering sisters and brothers at the Peace Market Jesus was the sacrificial lamb of God carrying the sins of the world. Tae-II's death illuminates the meaning of Jesus' vicarious death. Tae-II was a sacrificial lamb of God, too.⁴¹

Reflection on the stories of minjung is especially important for the Christian witness in today's Korea. Minjung theologians' emphasis on the stories for theological reflection has significant implications for the promise and possibility of narrative preaching.

⁴¹ Nam-Dong Suh, Minjung Shinhak uh Tamgu, 351-353. I am in debt to A. Sung Park for his English translation of this story. For further reading, see Yong-Bock Kim's recent book, Hankuk Minjung uh Sahoe Jungi [The social biography of Korean minjung] (Seoul: Hangil Sa, 1987) and his article, "Minjung Social Biography and Theology." After Chun Tae-II's death, some of the conservative pastors preached that Chun could not make it to heaven because he committed the sin of suicide. See Do-Ki Paek's article, "Minjung, 'Han,' Jesueh Earlkul" [Minjung, 'Han,' and the face of Jesus], Presbyterian Life, July 1984: 11.

Recently, many theologians and homileticsians have been urging us to return to the story as an authentic mode of theological expression and preaching.⁴² Johannes B. Metz argues that Scripture primarily is expressed in narrative form: "from the beginning, the story of creation, to the end, where a vision of the new heaven and the new earth is revealed."⁴³ Christianity itself began, not as a reasoning community, but as a community of storytelling. The stories of the early Christian community were about Jesus of Nazareth: his ministry, crucifixion and resurrection. The narrative of events in the life of Jesus was told and retold in the faith community to meet its needs and

⁴² Strangely enough, narrative preaching has not yet been discussed among Korean homileticsians and preachers. Most of the recent discussions have been on "expository preaching," which is now the most popular type of preaching in Korea. There has not yet appeared any single article on narrative preaching in Pastoral Monthly, which is probably the most influential preachers' journal in Korea.

Recently, Professor Il-Wong Chung mentioned Erzählpredigt (Narrative Preaching) in his article. However, Chung views narrative preaching as being primarily for children. Chung writes:

Narrative preaching usually is used for the children's worship service. It is retelling the Bible story to children. When a story sermon is delivered in the adult service, it is during the Christmas Eve, Passion Sunday and Easter Sunday services. In the story sermon, there is no interpretation and explanation, but just retelling the Bible story as it is. This type of sermon is now widely being used in the West.

See Chung's article, "Sulkyo wa Kyori Kyoyuk Sangkwansung uh Shinhak jerk Sungchal," [Theological reflection on preaching and doctrinal education], Mokhoeja wa Sulkyo [Pastor and sermon], ed. Korean Church Research Center (Seoul: Dosuh Chul Pan Poongman, 1987), 129.

⁴³ Johannes B. Metz, "A Short Apology of Narrative," The Crisis of Religious Language, eds. Johannes B. Metz and Jean-Pierre Jossua (New York: Herder & Herder, 1973), 85.

concerns.⁴⁴ Subsequent church history, however, tells us that Christianity did not remain a storytelling community. Through the influence of Greek culture, storytelling began to be subordinated to rhetoric and argument in the centuries that followed.⁴⁵

However, in light of new literary, canonical and structural criticism, increasing numbers of homileticians in the U.S. are questioning the propositional and rationalistic sermon and advocating preaching in some kind of narrative form. They believe that the very nature of the gospel is communicated through narrative forms. They are rediscovering the power of narrative sermons to engage people emotionally and imaginatively in the preaching event. Many narrative homileticians argue that people will respond and listen to a story with more sustained attention for the simple reason that narrative best corresponds to life. Barbara Hardy says, "We dream in narrative, day dream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate, and love by narrative."⁴⁶ Stephen Crites, in his important article, "The Narrative Quality of Experience," says human lives and human experience have themselves a narrative quality.⁴⁷ According to Crites, we are created to have a story, to discover where we came from, what we are doing--and why--and where we are going.

⁴⁴ Robert Waznak, Sunday After Sunday: Preaching the Homily as Story (New York: Paulist, 1983), 27.

⁴⁵ Harold Weinrich, "Narrative Theology," The Crisis of Religious Language, eds. Johannes B. Metz and Jean-Pierre Jossua, 50.

⁴⁶ Barbara Hardy, as quoted in Brian Wicker, The Story-Shaped World (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 47.

⁴⁷ Stephen Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience," Journal of the American Academy of Religion 39 (Sept. 1971): 291-311.

We need "stories" that give shape and meaning to our lives and allow us to make some sense of the joys, trials, and traumas of our existence.

Because human lives have a narrative character, narratives have a capacity to engage hearers, to evoke participation in the story being told, to challenge the lives and stories of the hearers, and sometimes, to precipitate a transformation in those lives.⁴⁸

Narrative preaching presents opportunities for transformation and participation in reality. The prophetic sermon that is composed purely in propositional and argumentative style will not easily move people in the direction of change. The listeners may agree with everything in the preacher's sermon, but they are not changed. However, when the sermon "evokes a vision in the congregation of what it means to be God's people," then, "that vision produces crisis, and if the vision is compelling, the crisis may produce growth."⁴⁹

In the last few decades, we have been preaching to our people, "You committed sins such as these, therefore, repent, and believe in Jesus and go to Heaven" But our contemporaries will not respond if we only emphasize their sins. Rather, they will listen if we show them vision of what they ought to be in the light of God's love and his Kingdom. If we preach to them, "You are already God's children, therefore, repent and believe in Jesus," from my pastoral experience, they will respond. This type of prophetic message of hope is more persuasive to my congregation.⁵⁰

Many misunderstand prophetic preaching as moralistic preaching. Thus, the prophetic sermon is understood as beating people over the head with its

⁴⁸ Jeffery Hopper, Understanding Modern Theology II (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 115.

⁴⁹ William H. Willimon, Preaching About Conflict in the Local Church, 55.

⁵⁰ Dong-Ik Kim, "Hyundain ul uihan Sulkyorul Udukke Halkutinka," [A symposium: How to preach a sermon to modern man?], Pastoral Monthly 13 (June 1989): 45-6.

moralizing about should, ought, and must. But the moralizing sermon will not essentially move the hearers in the direction of changing their behavior. Young Reinhold Niebuhr discovered the limits of the moralistic sermon during his pastorate in Detroit.

On the whole, people do not achieve great moral heights out of a sense of duty. You may be able to compel people to maintain certain minimum standards by stressing duty, but the highest moral and spiritual achievements depend not upon a push but a pull. People must be charmed into righteousness. The language of aspiration rather than that of criticism and command is proper pulpit language.⁵¹

The preacher needs to use narrative and poetic language as well as logic and reason in his sermon. Logic, information and analysis alone are not enough for an effective sermon. The preacher must enter "the landscape of the heart" and challenge the reigning metaphors of the hearers.⁵² Martin Luther King, Jr.'s sermons were powerful and effective "because he envisioned for his listeners what might come to be if they lived out the best yearnings and hopes of hearts."⁵³

⁵¹ Niebuhr, 113.

⁵² Thomas H. Troegger, "The Social Power of Myth as a Key to Preaching on Social Issues," Preaching as a Social Act: Theology and Practice, ed. Arthur Van Seters (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 208. I agree with Lischer that all sermons cannot become story sermons and that there are limits to the use of a story. But I disagree with his argument that stories do not provide the resources for implementing ethical growth or socio-political change. "The black tradition of preaching, rich as it is in the art of biblical storytelling, made a greater contribution to black endurance than to social change in the United States. The effectiveness of Martin Luther King as a preacher and agent of social change lay not in his ability to tell a story but in his incisive analysis of the situation in America and his prophetic call to justice." See Richard Lischer, "The Limits of Story," Interpretation 38 (Jan. 1984): 35.

⁵³ Troegger, 206.

Narrative preaching may be more effective and powerful than any other type of sermon for purposes of social transformation. Historically, Korean minjung have always used stories, songs, and mask dances to keep hope alive in bad times. Telling and hearing their stories have been weapons in the struggle against their rulers and oppressors.⁵⁴ Stories, more than rule books, shape how we behave.⁵⁵

Preaching on Peace and Unification

The most urgent tasks facing Korea in the late 1980s and into the 1990s are democratization, peacemaking and unification between the North and South. Prophetic preaching should address these vital issues that face Korean nationals, as well as Korean Christians, in light of the biblical witness. However, those who have preached on democratization have consistently been harassed by the dictatorial military government. Furthermore, there is danger in addressing the topics of peace and unification, since preachers may be accused by the authorities of being pro-communist sympathizers.⁵⁶

Despite the risks involved, the prophetic pulpit cannot be silent on the burning issues that face Korea today. One minjung preacher, Byung-Saeng

⁵⁴ Young-Hak Hyun, "A Theological Look at the Mask Dance in Korea," Minjung Theology, ed. Yong-Bock Kim, 45-50.

⁵⁵ Stanley Hauerwas, A Community of Character (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 149.

⁵⁶ One may be surprised to discover how frequently the subjects of Korean unification and peace are dealt with in Christian Thought, which is the most influential ecumenical monthly journal. Refer to the following issues: Feb. 1985, June 1985, April 1986, Jan. 1987, Dec. 1987, July 1988, Dec. 1988, March 1989, and Aug. 1989. Since July 1987, the Korean Government has granted limited freedom to discuss these topics.

Chun, preaches on the topic "Choose Life" (Deut. 30:15-19). In his sermon, Chun says:

Today humankind is competing to make more powerful and more dangerous nuclear weapons that could completely wipe out the whole human race on earth. What does the Scripture say to us? To choose a way of reconciliation and peaceful unification between North and South is a way of life but to choose the way of the nuclear weapons is to choose death for the Korean people at this historical moment.

Chun laments the Korean Christian's indifference to mutual arms reduction.

Even though our land is loaded with nuclear missile warheads and weapons, we do not have any concern and sensitivity. Rather we are brainwashed that more U.S. nuclear weapons in our land will guarantee our national security. Korean nationals are at the critical juncture between life and death. Our nation is divided by the will of super powers and we are hostile to each other. Our country became a possible nuclear battle ground for the super powers. Because of the Korean War memory and experience, we are still in the cold war mentality and North and South Korea see each other as the enemy. We regard super powers who actually make us slaves as our dear friends, but regard our blood-bonded brothers and sisters as our enemies who should be destroyed by nuclear bombs.

We should repent our hatredness and cold war mentality, and seek the way of reconciliation and peaceful unification. That is the way of choosing life, and that is the will of God We minjung must work for peace, unification, and reconciliation. That is the way of choosing life and that is the way of living as children of God.⁵⁷

In his sermon, Chun opens up new avenues of imagination by helping the faith community envision the peaceful Kingdom that cannot yet be seen: a world without weapons and war. The most powerful prophetic preaching for social change is the one whose analytical speech draws fire from the visionary

⁵⁷ Byung-Saeng Chun, "Choose Life," Hankuk uh Kangdan [Korean pulpit], ed. Gap-Shik Sung (Seoul: KCLS, 1987), 331-33.

language and, like the biblical prophets, shakes the foundations of the heart with poetic thunder.⁵⁸

Minjung Stories and God's Story

Korean minjung theology's emphasis on minjung poetry, metaphors, myths, symbols, *pansori* (Korean opera), folk songs, the scenario of mask dance, and life stories of minjung for theological reflection may contribute in many ways to Korean narrative preaching.

However, there is also the danger of placing too much emphasis on Korean minjung stories. Some preachers seem to emphasize the minjung stories more than the biblical story. For Nam-Dong Suh, both the Christian stories of the oppressed (in biblical and in post-biblical times) and the Korean minjung stories of the oppressed are major sources of theology united in God's *Missio Dei*.⁵⁹ Minjung theologians believe that God has been working for liberation not only in the midst of biblical people, but also in the midst of all minjung who have been crying for justice and shalom. They contend, therefore, that the social biographies of Korean minjung and other oppressed people must be studied along with the Bible and treated with equal importance.⁶⁰ They refuse to accept the premise that the God revealed in the Bible is unknown outside that history and subsequent church history. Young-Hak Hyun points out, "I refuse to believe in an invalid God who was carried piggy-back to

⁵⁸ Troegger, 223.

⁵⁹ Nam-Dong Suh, "Historical References for a Theology of Minjung," Minjung Theology, ed. Yong-Bock Kim, 178.

⁶⁰ Tong-Whan Moon, 44.

Korea by some missionary." ⁶¹ A. Sung Park summarizes the minjung theologians' argument as follows:

God was actively working among the minjung in Korea while Jesus was teaching and serving the Ochlos in Palestine. In God's eyes, the experience of the Korean minjung is as important as the experience of the Ochlos in Israel. In the history of Korea, we can find God's salvific work. This means that God's revelation is not limited to the events of the Bible but is pervasive everywhere. ⁶²

Minjung theologians argue that God as the Holy Spirit is revealed in many cultural and religious contexts and all histories are sacred in God's salvific plan. Therefore, they attempt to include traditional indigenous cultural and religious elements as parts of divine revelation. Thereby, minjung hermeneutics surpasses the boundary of the Bible and transcends the perimeter of Christianity, appropriating Korean history, culture, traditions, minjung social biographies, songs, mask dances, stories of Buddhism, and Chondokyo (an indigenous religion) for theologizing. ⁶³

Here, minjung theology raises sharply the problem of fusing the two stories: one coming from the biblical tradition and the other from the Korean social and religious traditions of minjung. ⁶⁴ This theological effort, however,

⁶¹ Young-Hak Hyun, "Do You Love Me?" CTC Bulletin [Christian Conference of Asia Bulletin on Theological Concerns], 1982: 4.

⁶² A. Sung Park, "Minjung Theology: A Korean Contextual Theology," 17.

⁶³ A. Sung Park, "Minjung and Process Hermeneutics," Process Studies 7 (Summer 1988): 125.

⁶⁴ D. Preman Niles, "The Word of God and the People of Asia," Understanding the Word, ed. James T. Butler (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1985), 293.

should be carried out without sacrificing the unique and basic characteristics of Christianity. Already, there are some signs of syncretism and hasty amalgamation. Jung Young Lee comments:

This kind of endeavor may easily lead to a movement ... that regards every religious expression as the manifestation of the same God, or it may lead to the danger of an undesirable syncretism. We have learned a lesson from the previous attempt to integrate Shamanism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, which led to the creation of a new religion known as Donghak or Chondokyo.⁶⁵

In minjung theology, we can see the danger of not making any distinction between the uniqueness of God's salvation history with his chosen people of Israel, which was culminated in Jesus Christ, and Korean minjung stories.⁶⁶ The uniqueness of the biblical tradition is denied in minjung hermeneutics.

Minjung theology is deeply rooted in the experience of minjung; thus, the experience of minjung is the norm and starting point in minjung theology. There can be no minjung theology that does not reflect the minjung's *han*, aspiration and hope.⁶⁷ Nam-Dong Suh, the leading minjung theologian, argues that the direct guidance and experience of the Holy Spirit are more important than the literal word of the Scripture. He regards the experience of the Holy Spirit as the primary norm and the Bible as a secondary norm for

⁶⁵ Jung Young Lee, "Minjung Theology: A Critical Introduction," An Emerging Theology in World Perspective, ed. Jung Young Lee (Mystic, Conn. Twenty-Third Publications, 1988), 20.

⁶⁶ Seyoon Kim, "Is 'Minjung Theology' a Christian Theology?" Calvin Theological Journal 22 (Nov. 1987): 271.

⁶⁷ Changwon John Suh, A Formulation of Minjung Theology, Ph.D. Diss., Union Theological Seminary [N.Y.], 1987 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1989), p. 143.

discerning God's will.⁶⁸ In minjung theology, therefore, the Bible is a reference book and, as such, it is relegated to secondary status.⁶⁹ Minjung theologians "tend to subordinate scriptural authority and use Scripture to support minjung experience as the norm of theological work."⁷⁰ The *han* experience of the minjung becomes more important than biblical revelation. However,

Experience as self-authenticating is open, as Karl Barth demonstrated, to the charge of Feuerbach that theology is merely anthropology written large; human beings project their human experience onto a heavenly screen and call it God Protestants should follow Luther's lead and bring experience under the judgment of Scripture, the final authority for Protestant faith.⁷¹

Scripture is not a reference point alongside the minjung's experience, but the definitive source for all theological work. Therefore, the challenge for minjung hermeneutics is to bring both the minjung experience and God's revelation in Christ, as witnessed in Scripture, together in such a way that the normativeness of scriptural authority is preserved in theological reflection and preaching.⁷²

While there are millions of stories in human experience, and many of them help us to interpret our world, the "story of God as found in the Bible is,

⁶⁸ A. Sung Park, Minjung and Pungryu Theologies in Contemporary Korea: A Critical Comparative Examination, Ph.D. Diss., Graduate Theo. Union, 1985 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1986), pp. 94-5.

⁶⁹ Jung Young Lee, 21.

⁷⁰ Nam-Dong Suh, Minjung Shinhak uh Tamgu, 166.

⁷¹ Horden, 143.

⁷² Jung Young Lee, 21.

for the Christian, the story, the frame of reference, the way of 'seeing in the dark.'" ⁷³ The Christian story invites us to live in the linguistic world created by the biblical narratives.

For those who are steeped in them, no world is more real than the ones they create. A scriptural world is thus able to absorb the universe. It supplies the interpretive framework within which believers seek to live their lives and understand reality.⁷⁴

Our stories do not tell us who we really are, but the story of God shapes our identity. As Amos Wilder points out, the Story builds a house for us--a place within which to find the purpose and meaning of life; a place offering stability and perspective in the midst of a chaotic and uncertain world.⁷⁵

Where in the modern world is the truly integrative vision, the house of being into which a person can enter to gain a unifying perspective? Different disciplines claim to offer that perspective, but they become instead new idols, bogus houses of being that can never fully satisfy. Modern preaching ... allies itself with a particular field of modern endeavor and attempts to translate the biblical message into the assumption of that field, and so offers only a biblicized but still ultimately secular perspective, rather than offering the primordial Story in all its richness.⁷⁶

⁷³ Waznak, 38.

⁷⁴ George A. Lindbeck, The Nature of Doctrine (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 117.

⁷⁵ Amos Wilder, Jesus' Parables and the War of Myths: Essays on Imagination in the Scriptures, ed. James Breech (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 51-5.

⁷⁶ Ronald J. Sider and Michael A. King, Preaching About Life in a Threatening World (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988), 82.

A theological problem arises when the uniqueness of the story of God is ignored. We must guard against the tendency of "privatizing" Scripture so that God's story is identified with "my" story, and likewise we must avoid too much emphasis on "our story," whether it is Korean minjung stories, the Latin-American liberation stories, or feminist or Black liberationist stories. We should beware lest we succumb to the temptation of identifying our partial stories with the story of God's redemption,⁷⁷ thus making our preaching anthropocentric rather than theocentric and Christocentric.

Therefore, it is idolatrous to preach only with our own stories, ignoring the fact that "God has a story too." As James A. Sanders says, "God has a story too; it is His story which is our real purpose in being. It is God's story in Torah and in Christ which is Gospel for the Christian."⁷⁸ God's story does not deny our stories of faith, but rather it invites us to embrace our stories as they are, imperfect and puzzling. Yet God's story always evokes in us the possibility of conversion, liberation, and new life.⁷⁹

If minjung theology is to become a constructive theology for Korean preaching, then it must become intratextual. Thus far, minjung theologians have produced many negative reactions among Korean Christians with their unacceptable biblical exegesis, hermeneutics, and theology with syncretistic

⁷⁷ Bernard W. Anderson, The Living Word of the Bible (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979), 82-3.

⁷⁸ James A. Sanders, God Has a Story Too, 2.

⁷⁹ Waznak, 57.

elements.⁸⁰ Thus, ironically, they are turning away many Korean Christians from genuine concern about human rights, freedom, justice, peace, unification, and the welfare of the poor and oppressed, for which minjung theologians and preachers are passionately striving.

Any prophetic preaching that will really touch the landscape of the Korean Christian's heart should be spoken from deep biblical roots and a faithful interpretation of Scripture. It has to be intratextual, theocentric and Christocentric. Korean prophetic preaching has to be good news, moving from God's grace to the inseparable claim on our lives by which we are motivated to become servants of justice, liberation, and reconciliation. It has to help Korean Christians to get a glimpse of the Kingdom, the "extravagant world" (Paul Ricoeur), and "a strange, new world, the world of God" (Karl Barth). Prophetic preaching has to proclaim God's passionate love for us, his zealous pursuit of justice and peace for his creation.

⁸⁰ According to Nam-Dong Suh and Byung-Mu Ahn, Jesus was the personification of the minjung and their symbol. Jesus' passion, crucifixion, and resurrection is to be understood in the same way. It was not Jesus of Nazareth, but rather "minjung," who was unjustly tried and crucified. That Jesus was raised means the minjung of Galilee was raised. See Byung-Mu Ahn's article, "Jesus and the Minjung in the Gospel of Mark," Minjung Theology, ed. Yong-Bock Kim, 131-151. Also refer to Ahn's article, "The Body of Jesus-Event Tradition," East Asian Journal of Theology 3 (Oct. 1985): 293-309.

Korean New Testament scholar Seyoon Kim charges that minjung Biblical scholar Ahn's effort to turn Jesus into a mere symbol for minjung clearly reflects the fact that such theologians are more concerned with a preconceived ideological commitment than with the historical Jesus. See Kim's article, "Is 'Minjung Theology' a Christian Theology?"

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

In light of the Korean textual tradition, every preacher claims that his or her sermon is truly textual and biblical. In actuality, however, unbiblical elements often dominate his or her preaching. A theological educator compares the chaotic climate of today's Korean Protestant preaching with the Roman Catholic preaching on the eve of Reformation.¹ In the same way, homiletician Sung-Koo Chung, in his important recent book, comments:

While Korean churches are being satisfied with phenomenal growth, the Word of God has ceased to be heard Rather, unbiblical sermons are preached and the wrong methods are being used for successful church growth. When our preaching is filled with political lectures, interesting stories, and lifeless allegorical interpretation of the Bible, our church will lose its power.²

Whatever the characteristics of contemporary Korean preaching may be, the centrality of biblical preaching is not one of them. Thus, many concerned preachers call for a renewal of biblical preaching. Historically, the strength of the church has always been in the gospel it proclaims, and, since the church stands under the authority of the Word, it follows that the only proper type of preaching is biblical preaching. Thus, if the Korean pulpit is to regain the dynamic power that rightly belongs to it, it will only be through a return to biblical preaching.

¹ Byung-Se Oh, "Uri Mosupul Sungkyungeh Bichuoh Boja," [Let us look ourselves into the mirror], Pastoral Monthly 10 (March 1986): 71.

² Sung-Koo Chung, Hankuk Kyohoe Sulkyo Sa [A history of preaching in the Korean church] (Seoul: Chong Shin Seminary Press, 1986), 395.

Preaching is biblical when the Bible governs the content and function of the sermon. Therefore, in shaping his or her sermon, the preacher always needs to ask, Does the sermon say and do to my congregation what the biblical text said and did to its original listeners?

Preaching has to do with the interpretation of Scripture. The way one understands, interprets and preaches is controlled by what one thinks Scripture is.³ When the preacher sees Scripture primarily as a set of truths or dogmas that must be believed, then he will usually preach propositionally, which demands intellectual consent from the listeners. Propositional preaching is well illustrated in the Billy Graham style of sermon: "The Bible says if we do not repent, we are damned."⁴ When the preacher perceives Scripture primarily as ethical teaching or the way toward personal fulfillment, his delivery could be less effective than that of a skilled Rotary Club speaker or a well-trained therapist within their respective settings. If the preacher sees the Bible as a source book for political and economic revolution, then his sermons are basically political and economic judgments of society.⁵

The preacher's understanding of what the Scripture is profoundly influences his or her hermeneutics. The preacher brings to the interpretative process certain presuppositions and prejudices affecting his work. But "The central and most serious presupposition influencing hermeneutics is one's 'doctrine of scripture.'"⁶

³ Best, 11.

⁴ Elizabeth Achtemeier, "The Artful Dialogue," 21.

⁵ John H. Leith, The Reformed Imperative (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988), 22.

⁶ Hobbie, 122.

The presupposition ... relative to scripture issues out in the power of proclamation. Certainly it was the clear commitment of the Reformers to the meaning and place of scripture which made their preaching and interpretations the heart of the Reformation and a model of Protestantism. They came to the scripture with the "hermeneutical principle" that the Bible is the witness to the one purpose of God with his people and that all parts of it were to be read in the light of its center and principle subject: God acting in judgment and mercy in Christ.⁷

To preach Biblically, Korean preachers should have a strong affirmation on the authority of the Scripture, because it points or witnesses to God's revelation in Jesus Christ, the Word of God revealed.⁸ Karl Barth says that biblical hermeneutics is always guided by the subject matter of the text. "The universal rule of interpretation is that a text can be read and understood and expounded only with reference to and in light of its theme."⁹ The subject or theme of Scripture is God, who comes to us in Christ, and who is active in the world in the power of the Spirit. Therefore, biblical preaching should be "focused on this God and the world and human life in relation to this God."¹⁰ In light of the subject matter of Scripture, preaching must be theocentric and Christocentric, and good news.

Korean expository preachers, who are sure of their biblical preaching, often adopt the methods of moralistic, allegorical and spiritual interpretation.

⁷ Hobbie, 121.

⁸ Donald K. McKim, What Christians Believe About the Bible (Nashville: Nelson, 1985), 79-80.

⁹ Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, vol. 1/2, 493.

¹⁰ William R. Barr, "The Bible and Preaching: A Theological View," Lexington Theological Quarterly 16 (Oct. 1981): 123.

Their sermons reveal abundant biblical background information.¹¹ They talk about a Bible text at length, discuss its historical setting and original meaning accurately, and yet the claims of the text are not heard anew. Korean expository preachers should not assume that biblical preaching is happening because there is much talk about the text. Biblical preaching is not a book report, but "is a proclamation of what has been heard in and through the text."¹² Korean expository preachers use the advisory or constitutive hermeneutics mainly to support, nurture and educate their congregations for personal spiritual growth and evangelism. What they need to use more, however, is prophetic hermeneutics to challenge their congregation. Prophetic preaching on social justice, liberation and peacemaking is not optional for a few, but should be normative for all preachers.¹³ Korean expository preachers often mute or silence the radical claims of the text; therefore, they need to allow the sermon a function analogous to the text.

Korean minjung preaching raises the question of fusing two stories: Biblical and Korean minjung stories, which include the stories of Shamanism, Buddhism and indigenous religions. However, their theological efforts have shown questionable syncretism. Literary critic Eric Auerbach asserts that Biblical narrative has a "tyrannical authority." He states that the Bible's claim to truth is tyrannical in the sense that it excludes all other claims to truth.

¹¹ Homiletician Chang-Bok Chung says that most Korean preachers spend 85% of their time talking about the text and the remaining 15% on application to contemporary life. See Chung's article, "Hankuk Kyohoe Sulkyo uh Yuhung Bunsuk" [Typological analysis of Korean church's sermons], Sungsuh wa Hyundai Mokhoe [Bible and contemporary ministry], ed. GTU (Seoul: Yonsei Univ. Press, 1982): 131-32.

¹² Keck, 55.

¹³ McElvaney, 57.

The world of the Scripture stories is not satisfied with claiming to be a historically true reality--it insists that it is the only real world, is destined for autocracy. All other scenes, issues, and ordinances have no right to appear independently of it, and it is promised that all of them, the history of mankind, will be given their due place within its frame, will be subordinated to it Far from seeking, like Homer, merely to make us forget our reality for a few hours, it seeks to overcome our reality; we are to fit our own life into its world, feel ourselves to be elements in its structure of universal history.¹⁴

The Biblical story provides Christians with the framework for interpreting reality and their world. Recently, George Lindbeck proposed intra-textual theology that "redescribes reality within the scriptural framework rather than translating Scripture into extrascriptural categories. It is the text, so to speak, which absorbs the world, rather than the world the text."¹⁵ Korean minjung preachers must seek to define all reality according to the biblical world rather than reinterpret the biblical world according to an extratextual frame of reference such as Shamanism, Buddhism or indigenous religious stories. In light of the Korean church's textual tradition, Korean minjung preaching should be exegetical and intratextual. Thus far, Korean minjung theologians and preachers have been more interested in the stories of Korean minjung, Korean folklore, *pansori* (Korean opera), mask dances and shamanistic rituals than in the story of God. Thus, many Korean Christians are turned away from hearing genuine prophetic messages. Many minjung sermons are not biblical in the sense that they fail to deal with the subject matter of the Scriptures: the story of God. They fail to let the Bible govern the content of the sermon.

¹⁴ Erich Auerbach, Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, trans. Willard Trask (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1953), 14-5.

¹⁵ Lindbeck, 118.

Korean prophetic preaching must be deeply rooted and grounded in the living Word, as in the case of Joong-Pio Lee and Byung-Saeng Chun, to move the imagination of Korean Christians in the direction of social justice, reconciliation and peace between North and South Korea.

Paul Yonggi Cho and many of his followers mainly use the constitutive hermeneutics of stressing God's special blessings of health and wealth when their congregations need to be challenged by the message of God's demand for social justice, peacemaking and human rights. Cho's hermeneutics of three-fold blessing may be popular and may result in spectacular numerical church growth, but it will not conform his congregation to the image of the crucified, risen Lord.

In recent biblical studies, many scholars, influenced by Gadamer and Ricoeur, argue for textual autonomy. For them, the authorial intent is not decisive for determining the meaning of the text.

The text's career escapes the infinite horizon lived by its author. What the text means now matters more than what the author meant when he wrote it.¹⁶

The reader-response critics claim that there is no such thing as pure objective content apart from the meanings that are not supplied by the reader. In traditional criticism the text exercises control over the interpretation, but "in reader-response criticism the creative role of the reader is regarded as entirely legitimate."¹⁷ Thus, some regard the search for authorial intention unnecessary and its role in interpretation minimal.

¹⁶ Paul Ricoeur, Interpretation Theory (Forth Worth: Texas Christian Univ. Press, 1976), 87-8.

¹⁷ John Barton, "Reading and Interpreting the Bible," Harper's Bible Commentary, ed. James L. Mays (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 11.

Indeed, the biblical text is multivalent and has a "surplus of meaning." Textual meaning is not exhausted by the authorial intention, because there are levels of meaning that are only disclosed in a new life-setting. Therefore, "No single interpretation, even that which was intended by the author, exhausts all the meaning of the text."¹⁸ Every text has a variety of possible correct interpretations. "However, to disregard a writer's intention and to treat a text as autonomous, is to open the door to privatism and subjectism."¹⁹ Although the biblical text has multiple layers of meaning, there is a boundary line that will tell the interpreter whether or not his or her interpretation is faithful to the intention of the text.

Around every text there is what we may think of as an invisible circle. This arena of authentic interpretation contains all the valid concerns of any text. We can never actually define where the boundary line for this arena exists, but we know it is there because some interpretations are wrong and clearly lie outside it.²⁰

The boundary line of authentic interpretation can be verified through exegesis. However, many preachers, eager to discover relevance and application, never take time to hear what the text really says.²¹ Thus, Lloyd Bailey likes to define hermeneutics as the entire process of interpretation, of which exegesis is the initial step.²² Biblical hermeneutics begins with exegesis, which is the attempt to discover the original and literal meaning of texts.

¹⁸ Craddock, Preaching, 115.

¹⁹ Craddock, Preaching, 115.

²⁰ Wilson, 78.

²¹ James Danne, Preaching with Confidence (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 61.

²² Lloyd R. Bailey, "From Text to Sermon: Reflections on Recent Discussion," Quarterly Review 1 (Spring 1981): 8.

Cho's health and wealth gospel, based on 3 John 2, is an improper interpretation. The error is in his hermeneutics, precisely because his hermeneutics is not controlled by good exegesis. Cho has read into the texts meanings that were not there.²³

... biblical texts can be made to mean whatever they mean to any given reader In contrast to such subjectivity, we insist that the original meaning of the text--as much as it is in our power to discern it--is the objective point of control.²⁴

Also, a biblical text must be interpreted in the context of the whole. According to Reformers, the Scriptures interpret the Scriptures. Biblical interpreters must verify the meaning of the text in light of the whole canon.²⁵ To give supreme visibility to a marginal and isolated text such as 3 John 2, while ignoring the broad meaning of the text, is to invite wrong interpretation.²⁶ In Cho's sermons, the controlling factor in the interpretative process is the material needs of the congregation; their desire for prosperity, success and health. Cho's preaching is basically anthropocentric. Cho fails to let the Bible govern the content and function of his sermon.

F. Wellford Hobbie believes that the major threat to the contemporary sermon is the use of a biblical text to speak our current ideological views on social and political issues. He observes that many preachers, who pride themselves on being biblical, fall into the category of being propagandizers for a particular ideology. Cho's preaching can be categorized as ideological.

²³ Gordon D. Fee and Douglass Stuart, How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 26.

²⁴ Fee and Stuart, 26.

²⁵ Greidanus, 112.

²⁶ James Cox, Preaching (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 65.

"Ideological preaching is that which absolutizes the interests of the social group to which the congregation belongs."²⁷ It usually soothes rather than challenges, inspires rather than converts, and reflects the values and aspirations of the culture. Cho's message mirrors the prevailing secular culture of materialism. It basically appeals to our selfishness and desires for worldly success and wealth.

Textual interpretation always operates within the horizon of the interpreter's presuppositions, prejudices or ideologies. Thus, many argue that it is our prejudices, not our presuppositionless objectivity, that is indispensable in the interpretative process.²⁸ However, our ideologies should not mute or distort the textual claims on us. Thus, it is essential for the preacher to identify his or her ideologies brought into interpretation "and to have these ideologies enter into debate or dialogue with the passage, with what Karl Barth has described as 'the strange new world within the Bible.'"²⁹ William R. Barr summarizes W. Countryman's advice on hearing and interpreting scripture as follows:

- 1) Be suspicious if we find ourselves agreeing for the most part or feeling comfortable with the biblical message, for that may indicate that we are hearing more our own preferences than the living God, who is the Great Disturber as well as the Great Comforter; and

²⁷ Bloesch, The Reform of the Church, 18.

²⁸ Mark I. Wallace, "The World of the Text: Theological Hermeneutics in the Thought of Karl Barth and Paul Ricoeur," Union Seminary Quarterly Review 41, no. 1 (1986): 5.

²⁹ Hobbie, 123.

2) pay attention to what may strike us as odd or puzzling in the biblical narratives because pondering over such instances may lead us to see things in quite new and beneficial light.³⁰

The biblical preacher must allow his previous understanding, prejudices or ideologies to be challenged by the living Word of the Bible. He must be willing to be guided by it and transformed by it.

Exegesis of the Text

Unfortunately, many Korean preachers bypass exegetical work in preparing their sermons. Instead, they will pray over and meditate on the passage until it yields a sermon idea. They will then preach the so-called "spiritual meaning" of the text or launch forth into a development of the sermon idea through their personal opinions or current thoughts.³¹ Accordingly, many sermons are really only the general impressions of the preacher as to what the passage seems to say. The sermons that result from this procedure may be interesting, or even helpful, but they do not really come to terms with the meaning of the text.

A "solid exegesis" is the foundation of all truly biblical preaching.³² Therefore, the first hermeneutical task of the biblical preacher is to engage in exegesis. The purpose of exegesis is to arrive at the actual meaning, so as to learn what it really says on its own terms and not what we think or wish it says. The Bible is an objectively "given" document with its own form, history,

³⁰ William R. Barr, "Scripture as Word of the Living God," Lexington Theological Quarterly 22 (July 1987): 82-3.

³¹ Keun-Won Park, "Onuluh Mokhoejawa Shinhak Hyungsung," [Today's pastor and theological formation], 32.

³² Bernard L. Ramm, "Hermeneutics," Baker's Dictionary of Practical Theology, ed. Ralph G. Turnball (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), 99.

languages, theology and world views. Thus, the only way we can understand the Bible is through exegesis.³³

Exegesis is a process by which one enables the text's own meaning to come forth in its own terms. Exegesis (leading out) is often contrasted with eisegesis (reading meaning into the text); the aim of exegesis is to give the text its own voice Exegesis seeks to locate meaning in the text's original setting.³⁴

Through a careful exegesis, the meaning of a biblical text, its principal thoughts, its setting, its intention, its function, and its theology will usually be clear.³⁵ Without exegesis, the interpreter will be led to read meaning into the text, rather than bringing out the textual meaning in its own terms. Therefore, Korcan preachers need to remember that the first step to biblical preaching is to engage in exegesis.³⁶

³³ Achtemeier, Creative Preaching, 47.

³⁴ Leander E. Keck and Gene M. Tucker, "Exegesis," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, suppl. vol., (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 297.

³⁵ Achtemeier, Creative Preaching, 51.

³⁶ Recently, the value of the historical-critical method has been sharply questioned. Some of these questions have arisen from within the field of critical biblical scholarship itself. Walter Wink, a New Testament scholar, shocked many biblical scholars by insisting that historical biblical criticism is bankrupt. Wink gives a number of reasons why he thinks biblical criticism as it is currently practiced has become irrelevant. He begins by asserting that historical biblical criticism became cut off from the community of the living church that has produced the canon, and that biblical scholars write mainly for their professional peers. Wink also insists that the so-called "objective viewpoint" and "neutral detachment" of biblical scholars failed to take into account the cultural and historical limitations and biases of the interpreter. He further points out that many critical scholars, far from being reverent where the Scriptures are concerned, approach the texts as an object of scrutiny and anatomical analysis. See Walter Wink's book, The Bible in Human Transformation (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973).

Biblical Criticism and the Korean Church

In Korean Protestant churches, biblical criticism, especially the historical-critical method, has been considered an enemy that undermines the authority of the Scripture. Many Korean church leaders have thought that all biblical criticism was subversive of their faith. They have traditionally believed that the Sacred Canon as the Word of God can neither be criticized nor analyzed by modern humanistic scholarship. Through the strong influence of fundamentalism, "Most of Korean believers used to embrace the idea of the infallibility of the Bible and the theory of its mechanical inspiration."³⁷ The dominance of Biblicism in Korea has derived from two sources: Korea's traditional respect and love for the Canon and the fundamentalistic teachings of Western missionaries.

Fundamentalistic missionaries ruled Korean theological schools until the early 1960s, and seminarians were protected from learning biblical criticism. The old Princeton theology of the doctrine of Verbal Inspiration was the hallmark of Korean Protestantism, especially in the Presbyterian Church.³⁸

In spite of many weaknesses, however, the historical-critical approach remains of fundamental importance for any responsible interpretation of the Scriptures. Since biblical texts stem from a particular historical context, the interpreter has to try to find out something about that context in order to understand them. Thus, Christopher Tuckett claims that one can never jettison the historical-critical approach completely in order to understand the biblical texts. See Christopher Tuckett's book, Reading the New Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

³⁷ Harold S. Hong, "General Picture of the Korean Church: Yesterday and Today," Korea Struggles for Christ, ed. Harold S. Hong, 17.

³⁸ In contrast to the Presbyterian church and other denominations in Korea, Korean Methodists have been open to liberal theology and biblical criticism from the beginning. See Cho-Un Pyun's article, "Hankuk Kyohoe Sungsu Hesuksa" [The history of Korean church's biblical interpretation], Kuyak Sungsu Haesukhak [The Old Testament hermeneutics], ed. Cyrus Hee-Suk Moon (Seoul: KCLS, 1975), 307-37.

According to that theology, "The Scriptures not only contain, but are the Word of God, and hence ... all their elements and all their affirmations are absolutely errorless, and binding on the faith and obedience of men."³⁹ For many Korean fundamentalists, Calvinistic scholasticism and the Westminster Confession of Faith became the determining factors in biblical interpretation. As Yune-Sun Park, one of the most influential orthodox Biblicists, bluntly asserted:

The Korean church must now proceed to a right understanding of Scriptures. This advance can be made through Calvinism and nothing else. It will be Calvinism as it has always been in the past that will impart Biblical truth as a system to the human soul.⁴⁰

Donald B. Bloesch succinctly describes the biblical hermeneutics of Calvinistic scholasticism:

... there is the hermeneutics of Protestant scholastic orthodoxy, which allows for grammatical-historical exegesis, the kind that deals with the linguistic history of the text but is loath to give due recognition to the cultural or historical conditioning of the perspective of the author of the text. Scripture is said to have one primary author, the Holy Spirit, with the prophets and Apostles as the secondary authors Every text, it is supposed, can be harmonized with the findings of secular history and natural science. The meaning of most texts is thought to be obvious even to an unbeliever. The end result of such a treatment of Scripture is a coherent, systematic theological system, presumably reflecting the very mind of God.⁴¹

³⁹ McKim, What Christians Believe About the Bible, 55.

⁴⁰ Young-Hee Park, "Hankukuh Jukyung Shinhak kwa Park Yune-Sun Jukyunguh Uyi" [A contribution of Yune-Sun Park's commentaries to the Korean biblical exegetical studies], Presbyterian Theological Quarterly 52 (Autumn 1985): 85-6.

⁴¹ Donald G. Bloesch, "A Christological Hermeneutic: Crisis and Conflict in Hermeneutics," The Use of the Bible in Theology: Evangelical Option, ed. Robert K. Johnston (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 78-9.

Orthodoxy and biblical fundamentalism in Korea transformed the Scriptures from a witness to revelation to a doctrinal source book of a "set of propositions" to be believed. In so doing, the rigid and legalistic orthodox doctrine of inspiration denied, in effect, the Lordship of God over the biblical witness.

However, in the late 1960s, many young Korean biblical scholars who were trained in the major theological schools in the United States, Germany, and other Western European countries returned to Korea to teach in theological schools and gradually replaced fundamentalistic missionaries. Through their work, many biblical commentaries have been translated into Korean, and, in fact, the Korean scholars themselves have written fine biblical commentaries.⁴²

In recent biblical interpretation, there has been a multiplication of paradigms. Redaction criticism, new literary criticism, structuralism, canonical criticism, sociological analysis, rhetorical criticism, liberation and feminist criticism, and a variety of other approaches are available to biblical preachers in addition to historical and theological criticism. Sociological exegesis, in particular, will soon become a valuable tool for preachers. Biblical

⁴² Many Korean biblical scholars assert that the year 1966 was the turning point in the history of Korean biblical interpretation. That year, the General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church (pro-ecumenical) suspended the move to fire Dr. Keith Crim from the faculty of the Korean Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Seoul. Professor Crim, an internationally known Old Testament scholar, was accused of teaching that the book of Jonah was not factual history. By not removing him from the faculty (Dr. Crim later returned to the U.S. to assume the editorship of the John Knox Press), the Korean Presbyterian Church gradually began to accept biblical criticism. See Cyrus Hee-Suk Moon, Hankuk Kyohoe Kuyak Sungsu Hesusu [A history of the interpretation of the Old Testament in the Korean church] (Seoul: KCLS, 1978), 87ff.

interpretation and preaching from Scripture without an accompanying sociological analysis is like trying to understand Martin Luther King's "I Have A Dream" speech without taking into account the civil rights movement in the U.S.A.⁴³

Another tool for biblical preachers is the new literary criticism, which is concerned with the final form of the text. The influence of literary criticism is already strongly evident in narrative preaching and theology. One of the charges against the historical critical method is that it seeks the meaning behind the text. This approach is best represented by Joachim Jeremias. In his research, Jeremias sought to return to the very word of Jesus (*ipsissima verba*).⁴⁴ Bernhard Anderson comments:

The major weakness of historical criticism ... is ... that it tends to take us away from the text in the final forms and fails to deal with the Word of God as Scripture, as literature. It leads us into excursions behind the text, into hypothetical areas of the text's origin and process of transmission, into reconstructions of the situations that gave rise to the original text or its subsequent reinterpretations--and it tends to leave us in that far country.⁴⁵

Literary criticism, however, is not concerned with the world behind the text, but the world of the text. It is also concerned with the world in front of the text. What is the world in front of the text? Paul Ricoeur explains:

⁴³ Thomas G. Long, "The Distance We Have Traveled: Changing Trends in Preaching," Reformed Liturgy and Music 17 (Winter 1983): 12.

⁴⁴ Joachim Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, revised (New York: Scribners, 1954).

⁴⁵ Anderson, 29.

The sense of the text is not behind the text, but in front of it. It is not something hidden, but something disclosed. What has to be understood is not initial situation of discourse, but what points towards a possible world The text speaks of a possible world and a possible way of orienting oneself within it.⁴⁶

With the help of literary criticism, preachers, in their sermon preparation, may ask such questions as, "What is this particular genre of biblical literature attempting to do to its audience?" and "How does this text preach?"

All of these approaches to biblical criticism have something to offer and some insights to contribute to preachers. Biblical preachers should not settle for only one hermeneutical style, because no method is universal and a panacea. We can use the whole chorus of interpretative approaches to listen anew and afresh to the Word of God as that Word comes to us through Scripture.⁴⁷

The final goal of biblical criticism should be to let "the text become, in and for our time, the Word of God in the church of Jesus Christ."⁴⁸ Biblical interpretation must occur, within the context of the church, under the rule of the Word of God. The Korean church needs biblical criticism that will become the servant of preaching and thereby enrich its proclamation. Biblical criticism should not be an enemy to the authority of Scripture, but should rather enhance its authority. Korean preachers cannot bypass the necessary exegetical work for their sermons for one very simple reason: Biblical preaching begins with exegesis. A preacher who does not exegete Scripture does not live under, and in obedience to, the Word of God.

⁴⁶ Ricoeur, 87-8.

⁴⁷ Donald K. McKim, "Hermeneutics Today," Reformed Journal 37 (March 1987): 14.

⁴⁸ Sandra M. Schneiders, "Church and Biblical Scholarship in Dialogue," Theology Today 42 (Oct. 1985): 358.

He who shirks exegesis advertises in a loud voice that he does not really care what the Bible says but only wishes to use it insofar as it supports the clever points that he wishes to make. Such a man cannot possibly do biblical preaching, for he will not begin seriously with the Bible.⁴⁹

Exegesis of Life

Preaching is not a one-way movement from Scripture to the listener. Rather, it is a meeting, an encounter of the Word of God in Scripture with the people in their concrete historical situation, or what has been called the "text of life."⁵⁰ That life requires the same kind of hermeneutical and theological exegesis that the biblical interpreter brings to the text of Scripture. Han-Hum Oak, a well-known preacher in Seoul, says that many Korean preachers are well-versed in the details of the biblical world, but do not know concretely about the people living in Seoul.⁵¹ Only when we understand both the text and the congregation can we bring the word from beyond to our people in a meaningful way.

The sermon does not accomplish its purpose if it consists only of a repetition of what the text meant without exegesis of the congregation and the application of the text to them in their situation. Similarly, the sermon does not accomplish its purpose if it only exegetes the congregation and does not bring to them the word of God--the word from beyond that is contained in what the text meant--but only sets forth the advice of the preacher, however good.⁵²

⁴⁹ John Bright, The Authority of the Old Testament (Nashville: Abingdon, 1967), 170.

⁵⁰ Ian Pitt-Watson, A Primer for Preachers, 46-55.

⁵¹ Han-Hum Oak, "Sulkyo wa Chungjung," [Preaching and listeners], Pastoral Monthly 8 (Feb. 1984): 84-8.

⁵² D. A. Hagner, "Biblical Theology and Preaching," Expository Times 96 (Feb. 1985): 140.

To fuse the horizons of the text of Scripture and the text of life, the preacher has to live in both worlds. He must be not only the biblical exegete in the study, but also the pastor sharing the daily life of the congregation: their hopes and fears, faith and doubt, joy and sorrows. Only the preacher who knows his people from the heart and life of the congregation can urge them to "come home." The preacher can do so because he reads the text of Scripture as an exegete and the text of life as a pastor. The preacher needs to see both texts, with a kind of binocular vision, without either distortion or confusion.⁵³

We ... should realize that the living Word of God always occurs at the point of intersection of the message of the text with the concrete situation of those who hear the message. Today too, the message of Scripture becomes fruitful for preaching only when the minister, in solidarity with his congregation, tries to accomplish this intersection.⁵⁴

Biblical Content and Biblical Function of the Sermon

After exegeting the text and congregation, the preacher should shape his sermon to say what the text says and do what the text does. As Leander Keck rightly insists, the content and function of the sermon must be analogous to that of the text.⁵⁵

Recently, Korean homileticians and preachers have spent much time categorizing and defining the sermons: topical, textual and expository. The majority of them advocate expository preaching as the epitome of biblical

⁵³ Pitt-Watson, Preaching: A Kind of Folly, 55.

⁵⁴ Runia, 65.

⁵⁵ Keck, 106.

preaching. They contend that a renewal of Korean preaching will come only through the expository sermon.⁵⁶ However, an expository sermon can be full of the text but empty of the gospel, because preaching is not on a text but from a text.⁵⁷ An expository sermon can hammer the people with the moralism of the law and abuse the gospel by allegorization or spiritualization. The expository methodology a preacher employs is no guarantee that what he is saying is authentically biblical. Therefore, many discussions on the classification of sermons are worthless--even dangerous, if they keep the preacher from understanding what biblical preaching is.⁵⁸

The test of a biblical sermon is not how much Bible is used, or how much the preacher talks about the Bible, and not even whether the main points or subpoints come from the text. What is crucial for biblical preaching is the question: Does the sermon say and do what the biblical text says and does? What the biblical text intends to say and do must become what the preacher hopes to say and do in the sermon.⁵⁹ As David Buttrick puts it, "True 'biblical preaching' will want to be faithful not only to a message, but to an intention. The question, 'What is the passage trying to do?' may well mark the beginning of homiletical obedience."⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Bu-Ung Yu, 166.

⁵⁷ Deane A. Kemper, Effective Preaching (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 19.

⁵⁸ William D. Thompson, Preaching Biblically (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 10.

⁵⁹ Thomas G. Long, The Witness of Preaching (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), 85.

⁶⁰ Buttrick, "Interpretation and Preaching," 58.

What the text does is often revealed by its form. Thus, if the preacher wants his sermon to do what the text intends, he must be attentive to the form of the text. H. Grady Davis once noted that the gospel is not a verbal exposition of ideas, but for the most part is a simple narrative of persons, places, happenings, and conversations. "Nine-tenths of our preaching is verbal exposition and argument, but not one-tenth of the gospel is exposition. Its ideas are mainly in the form of a story told." ⁶¹

Korean biblical preaching should reflect this narrative character of the Scriptures. Sermons cannot always be stories, but they should be story-like. They must have movements and destination. A sermon is like a journey. Above all, Korean biblical preachers need to spend more time on the contents of their sermons, because, in many instances, they are characterized by unbiblical elements. In Protestant preaching, the first concern of a sermon must always be content.⁶² Korean preachers need to examine whether their sermons are a proclamation of the good news, and whether they are theocentric or Christocentric. Biblical preachers must ask of every passage:

What is that God who created the world, who made a people for himself, and who now is moving on toward the goal of his kingdom--what is that God doing, according to the words of this particular biblical passage? ⁶³

If Korean preachers approach every text from such a faithful stance, then the message of liberating good news will truly be proclaimed in Korea.

⁶¹ H. Grady Davis, Design for Preaching (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1958), 157.

⁶² Leith, 13.

⁶³ Elizabeth Achtemeier, Preaching from the Old Testament (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), 37.

There is a hunger and thirst for the living Word. Many Koreans are asking their preachers, "Is there any Word from the Lord?" (Jer. 37:7). Only biblical preaching that releases the gospel can feed the deep hunger of Korean Christians. As Karl Barth has written, "There is nothing more important, more urgent, more helpful, more redemptive, and more salutary ... than the speaking and hearing of the Word of God." ⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Karl Barth, The Word of God and the Word of Man, 123.

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